Why Writing Teachers Can't Teach Writing (p. 11)

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THE North American Review

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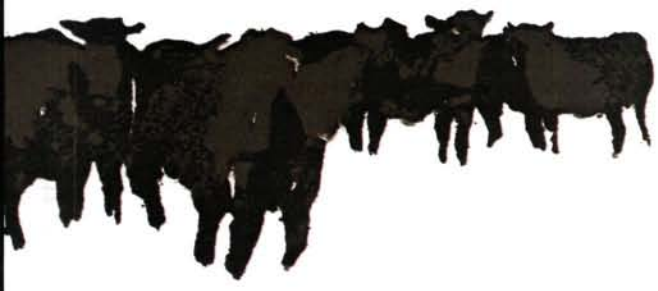

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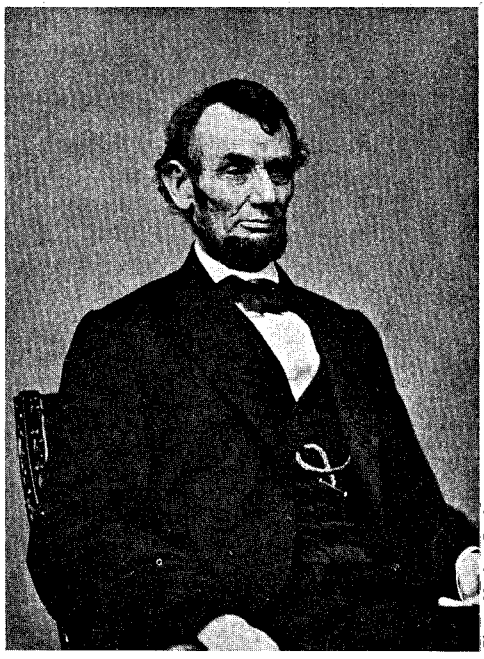

Photo: Matthew Brady

What sort of man reads the North American Review?

EDITORIAL NOTE.

The publishers of the North American Review have had the honor of receiving the following letter from the President of the United States.

"Executive Mansion,
Washington, January 16, 1864.

"Messrs. Crosby and Nichols:–

"Gentlemen: The number for this month and year of the North American Review was duly received, and for which please accept my thanks. Of course I am not the most impartial judge; yet, with due allowance for this, I venture to hope that the article entitled 'The President's Policy' will be of value to the country. I fear I am not quite worthy of all which is therein kindly said of me personally.

"The sentence of twelve lines, commencing at the top of page 252, I could wish to be not exactly as it is. In what is there expressed, the writer has not correctly understood me. I have never had a theory that Secession could absolve States or people from their obligations. Precisely the contrary is asserted in the Inaugural Address; and it was because of my belief in the continuation of these obligations, that I was puzzled, for a time, as to denying the legal rights of those citizens who remained individually innocent of treason or rebellion. But I mean no more now than to merely call attention to this point.

"Yours respectfully,

"A. Lincoln."

[Nothing could have been further from the intention of the Editors than to misrepresent the opinions of the President. They merely meant that, in their judgment, the policy of the Administration was at first such as practically to concede to any rebel who might choose to profess loyalty, rights under the Constitution whose corresponding obligations he repudiated.]

From The North American Review, April 1864

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Vol. 262/No. 4/Winter 1977

The North American Review

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Richard Brook

Letter from New Hampshire

Yesterday, conscious all day that a storm was coming, I worked on the woodpile at the cottage. We have had rain for five straight weekends, and some of the weekdays have been stormy. All the wood I bought in the spring is still as wet as it was when it was delivered, maybe wetter now, lying horizontal, drinking up the rain through the bark. I split wood, and sawed more, and split more, and carted and carried through the day. I came back here to my winter camp, sore and sick from working like a frightened trooper, digging in for the attack. I slept for a half hour and got up feeling I'd been in bed for ten hours, showered and felt more like an elegant human, one who had no need to saw, split, and stack against the winter.

I'm not really trying to build a woodpile to keep the cottage warm for a winter. Ten cords couldn't warm that leaky building through an entire winter. My plan is to lay up enough firewood to keep me comfortable when I return to the cottage in March or April, when most of the deep cold of the winter has retreated into Canada. The wood is for spring, not winter, although I may go over and fire up the stove for a weekend of rumination when the idea takes hold of me.

Earlier in the day, before the wood detail took me over, I was up on the roof of the cottage, burning out the creosote precipitate that lined the insides of my chimney. I took the pipe part way down and stuffed in newspapers, lit them, and waited for the fire in the stack to catch on the creosote. Terry, my landlord, climbed the ladder to chat with me while I waited for the smoldering papers to catch fire and clean the creosote out. He had never seen that done. We talked up there on the roof, looking out over the quiet lake, watching the chimney, watching leaves fall, and worrying out the politics of the college. He's a member of our Business Department. He chided me for bringing a fire extinguisher up on the roof with me. He has been trying to talk me into setting fire to the cottage so he can collect on his insurance and build a new one, one with fewer headaches, one that would bring in better rent. The lot the cottage sits on is worth twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars. He wants to get on with improving the property, but the still negotiable cottage stands in the way of his progress. Taking money for little or no overhead is more appealing to his business sense than making an investment with the chance for greater return. He hopes a fire will make up his mind for him. He's joking, of course, but he jokes more than he needs to. He wants a fire. Not like the one I need to keep me warm, unfortunately. I have explained to him that once he replaces the old cottage I can no longer afford to live there. I am his insurance company's best friend.

I finished with the chimney and went to work on my woodstove. It was still rusty from its residence in a dank barn over the last three years. All that time I had been attempting to negotiate a deal with its former owner, Boyce Ford, psychologist extraordinaire, member of our college faculty. Boyce is indecisive. He thinks first of all that he is a farmer. He *is* a farmer. He has meadows, and woodlots, and big gardens, four horses, goats, and a giant Golden Retriever. A wife and two kids grown and colleged fill out his responsibilities. His stove waited upon a plan to develop yet another room or work area around the rambling cape and connected barns. It never happened, discovering a function for his Atlanta woodstove. Finally we struck a bargain and I set up the rusty stove in my living room at the cottage. We had drawn the red and black hulk from a corner filled with shovels, scythes, and cobwebs built by spiders the size of sparrows. The stove kept me warm through the early fall, but was never cold long enough to be polished, so that is what I did after fixing the chimney. In my chilly living room I sat on my heels and gobbed on ribbons of inky stove polish from a tube I'd bought in Bristol that morning, visiting the corner hardware store after my morning coffee at the Village Inn. I polished my right hand too. I am reading Richard Wright's *Black Boy* now. I looked at my black hand from time to time, as I went about straightening up the cottage after finishing with the stove polishing. I tried to look at my other clean hand instead, but my consciousness always came back to the black right hand. Twice I made as if to shake off the black, as if it were dust, soot, or some kind of powdery grit. I was not amused by my division. This was black that would not go away. But I was white. The water is turned off now at the cottage. No way to wash it off. There was nothing delicate that I had to do. I did not need a clean right hand to sweep the kitchen and pick up kindling in the yard. But I could stand it no more, and got in my car, put the ignition key in with my black hand, and drove with one white hand and one black hand before me on the steering wheel all the way over to my winter camp in order to wash off my black hand, my shiny, polished, black hand. I had told myself I needed to get over to my winter camp to split some wood there, borrowing a splitting maul for the purpose from Terry's father next door. A pretext. The maul lay in the back of my little station wagon while I washed off the black, scrubbed it off with a brush, scraping at cuticles, under nails, till the ends of my fingers tingled and went numb. I lit a cigarette and drank coffee for a half hour, trying to use up as much time as a little incidental splitting would consume, and made my way back to the cottage, restoring the maul to its place beside my door, where Terry's dad and I have agreed to store it, and then went on with the business of sweeping and bringing order to my partially vacated cottage, forgetting my two white hands.

* * *

My FM set is not working in this new setting, the winter camp. I have not figured out how to rig an antenna. So I listen to AM. Here at midnight, on the eve of the eve of Columbus Day, the winter reception is hardly established. The Kennelly-Heaviside layer, or what-

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ever ionic/radiation belt is supposed to reflect those distant beacons, is not properly flapping/undulating around our earth yet. Give it another month. What I have right now is a station that booms in one moment and disappears as if it had signed off the next. I used to enjoy that feeling of distance, of reaching out across the world that came with listening at night to a station that came in and moved out, delivering Benny Goodman one instant and a dull hiss the next. Now I find it irritating, because I want to be able to hear it all, the way it comes steadily on FM, when you have FM. FM has taken the romance out of long distance listening and replaced it with steady state recordings. Not much difference between FM and Musak now. I understand that some Musak-like companies build tapes for FM stations so the station-masters may be freed from spinning records. They just slap on a twenty-inch reel of tape, from a bank of a dozen they receive each month. Nothing to do but segue in the advertisements, which are also on tape, another tape. I wonder if the second set of tapes, the advertisements, is also mailed out at the beginning of each month from another commercial agency.

Synthesizers can simulate the musical noises we have been trained to listen for, and other machines can imitate human voices. If computers can create, model products to meet the manufactured tastes of the proletariat, and computers can build the products too—as I understand they make cameras in Rochester—why, I suppose we could build clones to listen to the signals of the transmitters stashed around the country. And then we could all get back to our writing and leave the noises we used to delight in to machines that may appreciate the simulations. Ken Lash used to chide me for having inanimate things displaying human behaviors. I think he was upset about something else. Maybe too many humans were failing to act like much more than inanimate things at the time. Maybe that is why college faculties are so given to petulance, procrastination. Moving on with things has begun to look like agreeing with machines. Oh, my.

* * *

The sink is full of dirty dishes and I think somewhere down inside the pile of clutter in my sink is a cast iron frying pan I bought recently. I think it is rusting. I know it is rusting. I can hear it down inside the bowels of my cluttered sink, softly rusting away. It will be orange when I find it—bright orange—like some poppies I have seen. Bright red-orange. I brought a small door to an old woodstove out of the mountains one time. I had found it lying in a stream, bright orange from rust and the oxygen in the mountain water. It should have been further deteriorated than it was; I could still make out the name of the foundry and see a deer antler or something reliefed in it. But it had been preserved partly by the water, and partly by the fact that it had spent just half its forlorn life in ice. In that part of the mountains winter lasts six months, and my rusty door lay up there in the Pemigewasset Wilderness from somewhere in the 1870s . . . from just about the time the owner of the Ashland General Store built our Ashland house . . . when there was no longer a stick of useful timber standing anywhere between Boston and the Canadian border, and the logging camps had fallen to ruin, and the loggers went off to Minnesota to rape another country. When we were kids, wandering around southeastern Minnesota, we were watching woods struggling back from devastation laid upon the land by the loggers who forsook my door up there in the Pemigewasset Wilderness huddling in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. That's how orange my cast iron frying pan will be. Redolent.

A great hulking bear of a man was the best friend of my friend Tim. Diminutive Tim has gone off to save the state of Maine now, but I remember him telling about his buddy on canoe trips into the Machias region where the bogs that feed the Machias River drain nearly out of Presque Isle, it's that far north. And his big buddy would carry into that wilderness on fishing trips a giant twenty inch or twenty-four inch cast iron frying pan and all the grub that one would associate with the kind of cooking one could do on a frying pan the size of a tire rim. Only a big man could carry the pack he brought on portages. The dunnage was heavy. People work very hard on canoe trips, and usually come back thinner no matter how much they eat. My guess is that Carl (Good for me, I remembered the big fellow's name.) may have lost weight just lugging the gear and the food he took to survive on in the wilderness. But they didn't just survive. From anyone who went along I used to hear wild stories of the grand gustatory trips people took on the travel down the river. It was embarrassing sometimes because it seemed that all my friends had met and fished and eaten with big Carl, but I hadn't, and when the stories were rehearsed time after time everybody would talk as if I had been there, and there came a time when I stopped denying I'd been there, because I just could not stand to be left out of such great fun. I took to quoting great funny lines that were hallmarks of some of those trips with Carl, and my buddies would howl with laughter and slap their legs and say what a great good time that was with big old Carl. And I would silently agree.

Every canoe trip has a couple of lines, punch lines from jokes told everywhere else in the world but repeated in the wilderness and somehow funnier, more desperate than such discovery of irony might have been back in the city. Carl had told the joke about the Canuck who said at last, commenting on his behavior on an occasion, "I gott so mad I trow my coat bot' side de road!" Without any effort or preparation I can still make Boyce Ford hoot when I say that in my best Canuck Frenglish.

Cast iron frying pans remind me of Carl, whom I never knew except for what people said about him.

* * *

I just went to the icebox and found an apple, a sweet McIntosh, smooth and crunchy and mostly red with a firm but not brittle meat. I have learned to dislike Delicious apples, comparing them in my mind to something better used by beavers. I think the Delicious has succumbed to the same science that has taken the Irish Setter, an ungodly beautiful animal, and that through all the inbreeding produced ever more beautiful animals so hypertensive they cannot live around ordinary human beings anymore. Delicious apples have become so beautiful that they are the model for what every apple ought to look like. Eve must eat a Delicious apple. But like something out of a superstition, the beauty is in the outward form. They taste just like wood pulp. Sawing firewood in my backyard I sometimes get a fleck of sawdust on my lip, and it may make its way into my mouth, at the side of my tongue. Delicious apples taste a little like red oak. I think the sawdust has a bit of an edge on the taste of Delicious apples.

* * *

I have to get my two weeks' garbage out into the road for the trash man. He will be here in a few minutes, his grunting motor crunching down our lane filling up on garbage and crushing popping plastic bags and stained brown paper sacks into its lower jaw, the waste of my two weeks sliding back into its gullet, squashed in

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with my neighbors' waste. We all join there, tied by our refuse to a trunkline of bottles, cans, garbage, and wrappers. We all have so much in common.

One sack from the house, a great blackish green garbage bag full of notes, file folders, old manuscripts, bottles, garbage, and Kleenex. One sack from the old bunkhouse, where I stored the same kinds of things from last week, and neglected to get it out on the road in time for the advent of the trash man. My penalty for my dilatory behavior? The gray squirrel I found drowned in my toilet bowl a week ago and more has turned from cadaver to food source for billions of smaller organisms, and they are drunk with the fragrance from their efforts. The only difference between them and me is that I have devised ways of getting rid of the waste, flushing it out or washing it away by means of some technological advantage. In another time, I wonder if I wouldn't sit in the smells and not smell them. Probably I did that in a cave seven thousand years ago. I think I remember those times. But, then, I think I remember everything.

* * *

The wind is blowing at 20 knots across drifts of snow laid down by last night's storm. The flakes started wet and large and crowded closer together till the highways were splotched with white-outs and drivers sped straight into abutments, trees, gulleys. The slush was thick on the roads by five o'clock and motorists heading home, stopping for the weekend's groceries, running Friday night errands, were mired in mush and slop, unable to climb the seven thousand hills in the area, unable to climb at last into their own driveways, unable to go home in some cases, leaving their cars sideways in the middle of a road on a hill, not giving a damn if the car was smashed by a sand truck or severed by a nine-foot-high blade of one of our superplows. I drove one hundred and thirty miles in it, in a Fiat I borrowed from the VW dealer while he serviced my car. I don't know why I came through unscathed. I really don't think it is worthwhile to spend much time wondering why *we* survive and others don't. There are no answers. I tried to be diligent on the road, attempting to avoid danger, but I did my avoiding at twenty miles an hour faster than the people strung out on the turnpike whom I was passing by the hundreds. I am ordinarily a slow driver, but in that storm I went faster than my fellows, because I thought they were making themselves vulnerable through insufficient headway. But there were others passing up the strings of moping vehicles, others beside me, and others going faster than I. I cannot tell which cars were those in the wrecks I passed, the fast or the slow. I imagine there were some doing exactly what I was doing, and they are dead, or maimed, or at least inconvenienced today. There is very little reason.

God is like one of those ladies who sold goldfish at the Kresge dime store in Winona when I was a lad. On different occasions as I was growing up I would go to the five and ten and buy some goldfish, waiting by the giant glass tank at the back of the store for the clerk to come and help me. She would chatter away as she dipped her stained cheesecloth net into the water, swirling it among the bubbles and fish to catch just the one I'd need. Whisking up the orange fish into the shape of a yolk hanging, dripping in the gauze net. She put the fish in a white cardboard box that looked just like a chow mein container. The idea of eating something delivered in such a box made me shiver. What would a fresh cold goldfish feel like as you gritted down upon his spine and the fins scratched against your palate, I wondered, and shuddered again. Do gods shudder, I wondered. I still wonder. If gods shudder, aren't they like us and aren't we gods? Those are the questions I asked at the fish tank at the back end of Kresge's dime store. But from then on I think I felt the fish were my comrades. We were in it together from the time I was handed the shiny white cartons with the thin wire bales. I had to get them home promptly, with a minimum of jiggling. Jiggling was not good for fish, they said. Undoubtedly, the lady clerks had never seen a trout or a salmon in a rapids. But these were not salmon. I carried them home right away and made no side trips, not even to stop at the shop and show my dad, or my uncle Jerry what I'd got.

I bought quite a few fish. I think they found it a little hard to get me to change their water, or I changed it too often and they were pickled by the chlorine, which my father assiduously monitored for the water department. That is, we had machines that produced a graphic record of the chlorine that went into the water at any time of any day. My father would go down to the Water Plant after church on Sunday morning just to check things out and make sure everybody was on the job and the machines were running right. He was very proud to have such an important civic responsibility as chairing the Water Board. He took me along a lot. More than I cared. One time I learned that the chlorine had been increased because of a flooding problem somewhere in the city, upon the possibility that water from the river had seeped into the soil around the water mains and had created enough pressure to force foul water into them. Bad scene. They zapped the bacteria just like that. Chlorined them to death. Killed my goldfish too, because that was the day I decided to change their water, which activity necessitated removal from the main bowl into a temporary facility, a soup bowl/tureen or whatever, filled with the hyperchlorinated water. Imagine the goldfish swinging their gills, open and close, open and close, inhaling all that chlorine as I do my duty by them, and kill them with duty, like a father, like a god, by accident. □

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Kenneth Lash

O Britannia!—II

We have the conveniences; they have the civilization.

That was my early thought, revisiting Britain. I take it that civilization has to do with behavior, not buildings. In London I did not feel compelled to turn around when I heard footsteps behind me at night. There was no evident impulse on the part of the English to deface something simply because it's standing there. I did not anywhere see a "Fuck you" written on a wall. Norman Mailer would find no work as art critic. The subways are not marked up. Park benches are intact. Indeed, a number of folding chairs were leaning peacefully against trees in Kensington Park, used during the day and put back at night. Not stolen, not broken. One feels the sense of a general agreement that my right to do as I please stops short of interfering with you.

It doesn't feel like repression. It feels like freedom. One wonders about it, this English public behavior based on assumptions of respect for one's fellow-person and for the air around him, which entitles one to privacy in the streets and conveyances as well as at home. It shows itself in reticence and reserve at some levels, simple forms of politeness at others. Does it owe to the particular social structure of historic England, where for so many centuries manners and morals were not only set out, dictated, pictured forth by an aristocracy, but also enforced by that same aristocracy? That is, the magistrate who would ordinarily judge you for a misdemeanor or crime of any kind in the countryside was your local squire. Someone you knew and who probably knew you or your family. The whole village knew about the matter, and it would seem more often than not shared less your values in breaking the law (except, it seems, with poaching) than the squire's values in trying to enforce them. And in the cities, the way in which the police force was able to evolve as a non-weapon-carrying force, and to be uniquely successful at it, is instructive (to have a try at understatement). It seems to have been based on a disinclination to set an independent armed force loose in the country, along with the sensible proposition that if the cops didn't feel compelled to carry arms neither would the robbers. A sensible proposition in England; certainly not in the wild U.S. The difference may, again, owe to the existence of an evolved aristocracy.

Society sets manners. But what part of society, Church or Marines? In medieval Europe and Britain it was the aristocracy, who were a little of each. In medieval social organization it was part of the function of knighthood, gentry, nobility, to show forth the manners and

morals of a civilized human being to a people not yet very civilized. The great medieval pageants undoubtedly appealed to imitation in forms of manner as the sermons and morality plays did to matter, both influencing modes of conduct. These forms of imitativeness would become to an extent ingrained, appropriated, as the gap between noble and peasant began to fill up with various levels of middle folk, with the gentry as a kind of pivot between the extremes. A shared manner and attitude, shaded by place, time, and class but nonetheless possessing a clearly identifiable common core—an "Englishness"—evolved.

We have no such thing in our country unless you wish to turn the scenario around, see the sharing in a common lack of tradition. The rough and tumble of the miner was a reflection of the rough and tumble of the men who owned that mine, who robbed and fought each other over it. Our source of behavior model was a religious source — the various sects of Protestantism, so astringent in their theologies, so accommodating in their weekday moralities. With Sunday either weakened or gone out of the balance by now, nothing seems left in the United States to take the place of those religious and social restraints, and we find ourselves with one of the most hostile populations in the world. Hostile to each other. We are an inconsiderate populace; indeed, there are aspects of the treatment of one person by another that are entirely unknown to a majority of people in the United States.

In Kensington Park of a Sunday afternoon people are sitting quietly reading newspapers and books, watching the fountains, the endless ducks and swans. Some people are feeding the birds, teaching their children to feed them, or hallooing at their favorite swans, like one lady all in perfect browns of tweed and shoe, tilting and scurrying down the walk with a paper bag clutched to her bosom and keening a cry, "Willy-HOO-hoo, Willy-HOO-hoo!" The swan of her affections—I presume named Willy—brought his beak out from under his feathers and waved it gently, sinuously, like a cobra doing the tango. Those old myth-makers knew their swans. Further along the walk was a box sitting up on a pole, one side of it open, wired. There was a pigeon inside it. We walked up and read the notice on the box advising that if an injured bird were found please place it in this container and phone the following number; help would be forthcoming. One was not surprised.

I was surprised, though, when we were putting out from Hockley Heath on that long, skinny H.M.S. *Unicorn* I wrote of last fall. As we began to move out along the canal I saw a four- or five-year-old boy standing up on top of the

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opposite canal bank, behind a fence presumably put there to keep him from toppling in. He was singing. Holding onto the fence and singing, by himself. As we drifted slowly by I waved at him. He waved back and shouted, "Have a nice holiday." Where did he learn such civility? Yes, yes, from his elders, but they weren't there to influence his choice of responses to my wave. That was his own. It felt like a gift. And put me to reminiscing over a clearly unforgettable incident with children that took place in Paris some twenty years ago. I was walking among a gaggle of young schoolchildren dressed in their blue smocks going home from school, bouncing, skipping, sliding, whatever was more than walking and less than running. I was admiring their ability to speak French. Two of them were walking with hands thrown carelessly over each other's shoulders like grown-up men (the word is *copains*). They were discussing a classmate. "I tell you, me, that Jeannot has eight years, not seven," said the smaller of the two. "And in what fashion do you arrive to know this?" asked his companion. "I him asked," replied the smaller, matter-of-factly. "Ah," exclaimed the larger, "that you are not well brought up (*que tu n'es pas bien élevé)!*"

Back to reality. It's 1977 A.D. An acquaintance from BBC tells me he was mugged recently outside his own apartment. "Did they try to hurt you?" I asked. "No," he said. "You've got maybe a year or two left," I said, "but you'll probably catch up with us." "I'm afraid so," he said. Then there was punk rock. Then there were race riots in Notting Hill during a festival. And always at the bottom, swirling, lapping, receding and coming back, the waves of labor strife eating away, eating away at the island, at the unity which is all that can protect it, see it through its time of diminishment. One becomes Churchillian. Yet the "heart" of England is what has most characterized that nation, "heart" in both its connotations—courage and love. Love can survive class warfare and perhaps all forms of strife save the ideological. Ideology is not only "the other woman," it is the *perfect* woman. Because it exists only in the mind. Somehow we never hold ideology responsible for its street behavior. "Means" are of this world, and so necessarily corrupt. "Ideals" are of the other, and can stay untainted. A pitiable paradigm.

Violent commitments to ideology make one recall fondly the days of "muddling through." They seem as far removed as silent films. Is it true as well as appealing to say that in order to muddle there must be a middle? Depending on your view of things, either a precarious point of balance or a hole in the center of the political line? One relaxes, swinging back and forth in diminishing oscillations until stillness is reached; or probes—blindly, gently—here and there until the space between obstructions is felt, then slips through. In a sense the "middle" is exactly neither here nor there. That's why it can be characterized as a space. And by antagonists is often called "nowhere." And often feels that way, as people rush by going "somewhere." But middle can represent conviction. Nowhere represents doubt. Doubt doesn't result in muddle. Doubt is more apt to result in paralysis. In sudden vacuums. In a sense of decline.

I can't know what's going to happen in England, but the belief that it is muddling through seems wishful. Maybe North Sea oil will magically rescue the Exchequer and restore economic peace (though I was told they'll probably make less on that than on their investment through British Petroleum in Alaskan oil). Maybe when internal strife gets to a final crunch the parties will pull up short. Maybe Britain will break under a combination of class warfare reinforced by regionalism and by the separative elements of egalitarian individualism. Maybe "country" is out of date in the new era of International Personhood. Psychology plus Media are accomplishing what Marxism never could.

The screen shows me blurred images of bitterness and beauty. Perhaps I'm seeing it as a technicolor epic, the way an outsider would who grew up to his share of England in books. Magnificent books.

* * *

Perhaps in compensation for such unusual verbal gifts, the modern English seem to suffer from great patches of visual illiteracy. If beauty of surrounding isn't given to them by nature or inheritance, it doesn't exist. Their architecture is frightful. The new building—largely apartments or "townhouses"—looks like the kind of thing we tried to build as a gift to the ghettos ten or fifteen years ago, and which the ghetto people promptly tore down. Even the older housing is grim, forbidding, with almost no provision for variety of color or form or quality. It tends to consist of a long rectangle cut into slices of house, what we call row houses and can be seen typically in Baltimore for instance, or parts of William Penn's state. Usually the long rectangle sits right up against the street with a thin ribbon of sidewalk for access; in its advanced form, there are Kleenex-sized front gardens. Here the English love of and skill in gardening softens the bleak effect of the housing. The only good architecture seems that left over from the past—the half-timbered and stucco Tudor style and the earlier forms leading to it, which might be called not so much English as late medieval International. A style one might as easily find in Flanders as in England. The great English countryside is so blessedly green and undulating, so tidy, so kept and manicured, that one is perhaps more shocked by the show of town and city building which flaunts either a misunderstanding or a grandiose ignoring of the importance of the visual in human surroundings.

On the other hand, they seem to have arrived to a point of understanding the importance of the visual in cooking. Their pastries now look lovely, almost French or Belgian. So do some of the main dishes. In order to preserve this sense of a radical advance in English cuisine, it is best not actually to eat any of it. It still tastes English. Largely of water, or sugar, or both at once. The discriminating traveler, I am told, still enjoys the grand English breakfast, the superb "tea," and for the remainder, sucks stones.

* * *

I mentioned earlier that an anticipated pleasure of returning to England was to hear the language. Language comes alive for me when its usage exceeds bare purpose—through style, play, pattern, whatever. When there's an inbuilt recognition that language exists in part for its own sake, that communication includes joy in the act, pride in the tools. The English have these senses of language. I'm not referring to the accent. Foreign accents are inevitably charming. For a while. *The* English accent—the upper class accent—is a social not aesthetic device. After repeated hearings it sounds so exaggerated, so drawled out and affected, as to become a satire upon itself. You need a good shot of Cockney to clear the palate. But as a social device: Whew! It cuts across regions, ages, time itself. As a class distinction it identifies both absolutely and immediately, and does so regardless of the presence or absence of all other signs and conditions. One might be found lying dirty and dishevelled at the bottom of a clay pit munching a rat sandwich and the moment a constable yelled "Halloo down there," the

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answer, no matter what it might be, would at once proclaim the class of the speaker. And probably thereby influence the reaction of the hallooer. Such a social device is a kind of marvel: you can't not have it with you, you can hardly fail to find occasion for its use, it is life-long and independent of the rise and decline of fortune. It doesn't wear out. It simply wears out the other person.

* * *

Wherever, whenever, the sight of a pub makes me thirsty. Thirsty to go in. The big attraction is warmth. Oh sure, the marvelous beers, gins, and scotches contribute to that warmth, but they live there along with oak, polished copper, fireplace, light like a Flemish interior, and the lively buzz of people taking pleasure in each other's company. Not complaining, disputing, groping, brawling to jukebox noise with plastic stools in the blue light of a boozing machine. The pub is modeled after a home. The loudest noise comes from the dart players. Nobody else seems engaged in competition.

Which reminds me to cry a cry. *Why do we tolerate such awful beer?* Everywhere I've ever been has decent beer, most countries have excellent beer. We have carbonated slops. Largely because around the time of World War II the New York ad agencies showed the beer companies the existence of a huge untapped market—women. But women don't like beer, the companies said. They don't like the *taste* of beer, the agencies said. So? the companies said. So take out the taste, the agencies said. Success followed beyond the wildest dreams. They took out the taste, they took out the substance, they emasculated it. Like white bread. Bread and beer. Bottom-line staples. Does a society get the bread and beer it deserves? I hope not, or we're sunk.

On the other hand, numbers of English women drink what they call pink gin. Maybe it enlarges their bust. Something does. After a few days I began to question that term "bird," which seemed affectionate but not aerodynamically accurate. Those girls won't fly. Just standing up straight must give them backache.

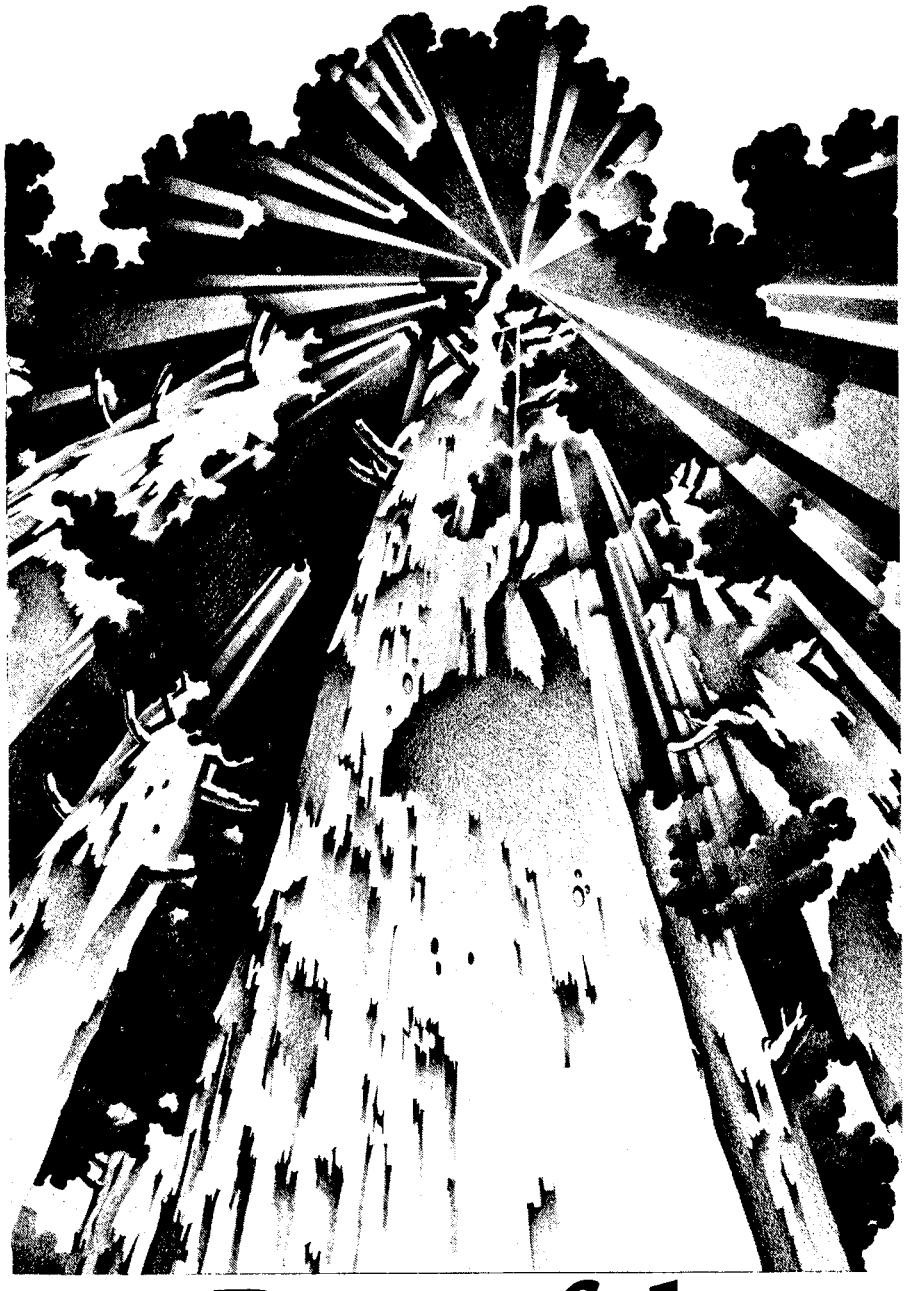
* * *

And so we say goodbye for now to England, glorious Albion, the natives in their native dress (I bought a Sherlock Holmes overcoat) standing, waving on the docks (I slipped and crashed on a puddle of grease in the very middle of Heathrow airport) . . .

"Come again, Yank," they sang.

"If you must," someone muttered. □

In the time it took to grow this tree, we grew a country.



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John Lindberg

Composition: Cult or Competence?

Introduction: I write this essay as an English teacher speaking to English teachers. Counting my four years as a teaching assistant at Wisconsin, I have taught English composition for twenty-five years, almost always two classes totaling fifty students every semester, fall and spring, back to back, year in and year out. And I have taught from the conviction that teaching freshmen to write is the single most important job an English teacher can do.

My colleagues do not generally share this conviction. The average English teacher is a devotee of literature and the creative imagination, and regards his composition class as a dreary chore in mechanics. Yet, just because he is a devotee of the creative imagination, the English teacher is among the most vocal protestors against the idea that writing can be taught like any other skill. As a consequence, behind the closed doors of the composition classrooms across academia, the composition teachers improvise and extemporize from day to day. They do not generally agree that good writing grows by the practice of productive routines.

This essay grows out of a quarter-century of combating such attitudes among my colleagues.

Abstract: Competence ought to be the goal of our courses in composition. But the grades given in the courses usually impose an arbitrary set of rules expressing the teacher's anxiety to eliminate mechanical error and to foster a cult of literary excellence. Instead of rules, we need a hierarchy of writing modules building progressively more adequate linguistic strategies of communication. Several books offer versions of writing modules for both students and teachers. Workshops also prove effective. When the teacher knows the strategies, he can guide students toward confidence in their writing at every level of the course. Grades do not affect such a practical goal.

The Mistaken Assumptions: How confident can we be about our grading? We are especially vulnerable about our grading practices because our grading standards reflect our professional assumptions. Most of us are not prepared to give impromptu definitions of our professional purposes. Yet every grade we give implicitly expresses our ideas of professional standards and of the quality of performance we want in our students. Everyone would benefit from making these judgments less implicit and more available as guides to professional conduct.

Now of course the literature abounds with descriptions of good writing. Schools with extensive composition programs usually have a handbook for both the instructors and the students giving detailed characterizations of work worth A, B, C, D, and F, often with samples of student work on each level. (See "Exhibit A" on page 12.) But such goals reverse priorities. A student can check them *after* he has written, an instructor can check them *after* he has read the theme. Ironically, this after-the-fact use devaluates the written work because it places the theme on an arbitrary scale of *merit*. The use of the scale rubs the student's nose in his failures, and encourages the instructor in the role of Olympian judge. Yet the scale supposedly intends to inspire writing of high quality.

Certainly no one is required to defer use of the standards until after he has done the writing. But how would you go about writing well by checking your work against a set of standards while you are engaged in the process of writing? The question shows the absurdity of standards as a teaching device. But simply because standards have only a putative use in the actual process of writing, they lead both the student and the instructor to feel that merit in writing is a mystery. The grade becomes a rank of merit, a sign of how far the instructor has decided to admit the student into the penetralia.

Evaluating themes becomes an exercise in slogans: "If you haven't written clearly, that means you haven't thought clearly"; "Sloppy diction means sloppy self-discipline." Imperceptibly but definitely the student comes under attack. This is the same student who watches keenly for the minutest change in the fashions of blue jeans, can discourse learnedly on the qualities of motorcycles, and spews unconsciously memorized statistics about the Super Bowl. Before we shut him out of high culture, we need to engage him.

True, the conscientious teacher lavishes hours of tutoring on the student, and more hours of painstaking written comments on the themes. (As Bob Zoellner said: that means the theme is getting the individual attention, not the student.) But even in tutoring, the assumptions about value in the descriptive standards lead the teacher and the student in a circular discussion. The teacher knows an expression is awkward, an idea poorly developed. He suggests revisions. The student might adopt them, but he thinks (and sometimes he says) that he has to do it the teacher's way to get a good grade. Why should the teacher's way be better?

The alternative to standards of merit seems obvious. We need a set of procedural routines that will produce good writing when they are practiced. All I have to do is to state the alternative that bluntly to evoke all of the reasons why we have not set up such procedures. These reasons divide into two lists according to our understanding of ourselves as professional people. We shy away from anything that seems behavioralist and we are too modest about our abilities in perpetuating our cultural heritage.

I do not think it is too much to say that our professional indoctrination has led us to view a literary composition as an object complete in itself, as well-rounded and implicit as an ancient coin ("dumb/as old medallions to the

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thumb."—A. MacLeish). We have been encouraged to accept the literary masterwork as an artifact of a quasi-mystical imaginative perception in the mind of the creator as cultural hero. Such works are inaccessible, we assume, to mundane techniques of analysis. Only prolonged contemplative discipline can perfect our practice of the arcane rites of explication.

Having mastered the arcana as admission to our graduate degrees, we assume that quality in writing requires a similar piety from our freshmen. We believe a reverent attitude must precede practice. To suggest instead that *a set of procedural routines can produce good writing* is to impugn the mystic authority of cultural artifacts and to offend our reverence for the shaping power of imagination. We overlook the fact that we daily flunk themes with sentences as rambling as Milton's and outlines as incoherent as Thoreau's.

Surely Milton and Thoreau have their strengths. And conspicuous among them we find the repeated wish that someone had taken the trouble to teach them to write English. That is, each felt his alma mater wasted his time with gerund-grinding (Carlyle's phrase, he being another self-taught stylist). Surely we do not undermine the citadel of literary culture with a few prosodic forms designed to improve fluency and coherence. These forms appear as the linguistic categories arranging the disposition of prose statements. They are easy enough to identify, teach, and practice.

The Old Handbooks: If they are so easy to find, why the proliferation of handbooks for composition classes? The fact is that most handbooks confirm the student's despair with lists of *don't*'s. Few handbooks offer plain prose patterns for students to imitate and vary. Some are beginning to appear, and before I have done, I want to talk about them in detail. But first I want to dismiss these myriad handbooks, workbooks, grammar guides, and "complete courses in composition" in one thousand pages.

Lately, in the Spring term, English teachers received a flood of free handbooks from the publishers. In itself this is unusual; inflation has put the chill on the palmy days when a teacher could get an examination copy just by asking. I assume that the publishers are getting generous with handbooks again in hope of exploiting the recent call for a return to basics. Certainly I'm not getting any free textbooks for my other courses. But more to our point in this essay, I am struck by the fact that the free books are so conventional. They are the same kind of handbook we used before the call for books of relevance in the '60s. Sometimes they are the same books, in a new edition.

These conventional handbooks have at least three traits in common: they are harmless, they are indistinguishable, and they are no good. One of them, the Harbrace handbook, once had sixteen rules for the comma. That's the point; they are rule books full of *do*'s and *don't*'s aimed at preventing every error in grammar and usage (always confused together) commonly committed by freshmen. The assumption seems to be that an error-free copy is a good theme, and *good* here means that the writer has been a good girl and performed her piece without piddling on the carpet. In fact, when I was a TA, we were told that a C theme was by definition error-free.

Now it is true that a college freshman should know how to write without conspicuous error. It is equally true that many cannot do so. But a third truth dominating the others is the fact that an eighteen-year-old has confirmed his writing habits; errors he makes now are likely to be permanent or eradicable only with intensive work. He has been studying the same writing rules for years—from the sixth grade, according to the state-required curricula in most of our states. Another handbook seems to him to be repetitive, and boring and insulting to his intelligence.

Doubtless many of us think that a student who has not mastered basics ought to be treated as a child until he no longer makes childish errors. But this assumption also assumes two mistaken ideas. It is a mistake to assume that the mechanics of grammar and usage are comprehensible to a child; and it is a mistake to assume that an understanding of mechanics produces competent writing. So-called basics have always been taught wrong.

In sixth grade, the student is exposed to the whole body of English grammar (hopelessly archaic eigh-

[EXHIBIT A] Table I. GRADING STANDARDS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION[1]

	CONTENT	ORGANIZATION: Rhetorical and Logical Development
Superior (A-B)	A significant central idea clearly defined, supported with concrete, substantial, and consistently relevant detail	Theme planned so that it progresses by clearly ordered and necessary stages, and developed with originality and consistent attention to proportion and emphasis; paragraphs coherent, unified, and effectively developed; transitions between paragraphs explicit and effective
Average (C)	Central idea apparent but trivial, or trite, or too general; supported with concrete detail, but detail that is occasionally repetitious, irrelevant, or sketchy	Plan and method of theme apparent but not consistently fulfilled; developed with only occasional disproportion or inappropriate emphasis; paragraphs unified, coherent, usually effective in their development; transitions between paragraphs clear but abrupt, mechanical, or monotonous
Unacceptable (D-F)	Central idea lacking, or confused, or unsupported with concrete and relevant detail	Plan and purpose of the theme not apparent; undeveloped or developed with irrelevance, redundancy, or inconsistency; paragraphs incoherent, not unified, or underdeveloped; transitions between paragraphs unclear or ineffective

[1]From *Joint Statement on Freshman English in College and High School Preparation* (p. 4), by the Department of English of Ball State Teachers College, Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana University, and Purdue University.

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teenth-century school grammar), the whole *shtick* from parts of speech to phrases and clauses, all at one go, in workbook exercises, as an abstract Latinate logical system, for a whole school year. And the student gets the same exposure every following year until he graduates from high school. American history is taught the same way, and American history and English grammar are the two subjects people understand least when they get to college. And even if they did understand grammar, it would not help them write. Writing is a different skill; writing is not even something you know, but rather something you *do*. And people get little practice in writing in high school. Most of the time goes to reading and to exercises in school grammar.

The Prejudice Against Behaviorism: So far I have not said anything new. I read Robert Cecil Pooley's *Teaching English Grammar* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957) in my junior-year methods class over twenty years ago. That long ago, Pooley had already begun to recommend a radical reform. Basically, Pooley advocates the teaching of grammar by easy stages, beginning with the recognition and composition of complete sentences in third grade, and leading by increments of sophistication toward an understanding of subordinate clauses by the end of high school. He has an appendix giving a K-12 model grammar curriculum. But English teachers have always rejected this rational program.

The logic of their rejection of Pooley seems to base itself on the assumption that a student has to know the whole body of conventional grammar before he can begin to compose essays or even sentences. The curriculum planners appear to believe that school children are not able to write connected prose until they are over the age of ten. Any teacher who deviates from this biased norm soon finds herself invited to discuss her attitude with the school authorities.

This biased norm is a powerful prejudice reinforced by the mistaken assumption that a knowledge of grammar brings about good writing. And since the planners also assume that students are incapable of writing connected discourse until sixth grade, then logically sixth grade is the time to produce the school grammar handbook, complete with fill-in-the-blank pages of model sentences.

I repeat, so far I have said nothing new. Pooley is a widely respected authority whose authority never makes it into the actual classroom. And if Pooley has been advocating reform in grammar teaching for thirty years, other authorities have been distinguishing between grammar and composition for even longer. Leonard Bloomfield's *Language* first appeared in 1933, and Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* in 1915. English teachers reject the implications of these books for their work just as they reject Pooley.

As I said to begin, the typical English teacher abominates anything behavioral, and linguistics has always been tarred with the brush of the behavioral sciences. Rather than submit himself to the so-called jargon of the linguist, the English teacher prefers his own élitism of critical terms with their odor of sanctity emanating from the cult of the imagination. Besides, linguistics is hard to learn, as it is bound to be, based as it is on the complex rhythms of human behavior. And the English teacher often has made his career choice in order to avoid the so-called hard-science courses in college. Even the courses in grammar commonly required of teaching majors remain grammar courses with no advice on adapting linguistics to composition.

What are the implications of these early linguistics books for the teaching of writing? Both Bloomfield and de Saussure recognize that they begin the study of language from a new perspective. Both men comment on the different meaning of "the science of language" between the nineteenth century, when it meant philology and textual emendation as in the work of Porson, and the twentieth century, when it means observation of informants in the field and the correlation of meaning out of sound patterns as in the work of Edward Sapir and Kenneth Pike.

Now perhaps I am about to say something new, for it seems to me that these two perspectives on language parallel the mistaken and the desired practices

ORGANIZATION Sentence Structure	DICTION	GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, SPELLING
Sentences skillfully constructed (unified, coherent, forceful, effectively varied)	Distinctive: fresh, precise, economical and idiomatic	Clarity and effectiveness of expression promoted by consistent use of standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling
Sentences correctly constructed but lacking distinction	Appropriate: clear and idiomatic	Clarity and effectiveness of expression weakened by occasional deviations from standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling
Sentences not unified: incoherent, fused, incomplete, monotonous or childish	Inappropriate: Vague, unidiomatic, or substandard	Communication obscured by frequent deviations from standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling

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in the teaching of writing. For the great majority of English teachers on all levels, the student's written work is a corrupt text, and the teacher views his work as analogous to the work of the editor of a defective manuscript. At least the classical or the Biblical scholar correlates the text with other sources. But the English teacher presumes to tell the student what the student really meant to say. Such an overweening magisterial attitude is just as much a mistake as its opposite, the one I mentioned to begin, the overly humble assumption that no one can prescribe routines for competent writing.

Of course I do not mean to disparage the work of the textual scholars, but I do mean to show that we are supposed to be teaching how to write a living language, not an artifact, however subtly imaginative and symbolic. Bloomfield and de Saussure revolutionized the study of language by taking that study out of the library and putting it to the scrutiny of languages as a living process. Neither of their famous books has a word to say about parts of speech, split infinitives, and sentences ending with prepositions. Instead, they discuss categories of communication.

Listen to de Saussure, for example: "Everything in language is basically psychological, including its material and mechanical manifestations, such as sound changes [or, we might add, graphemic representation, *i.e.*, written themes] . . . it is the viewpoint that creates the object." These comments appear early, pages 6 and 8, in the sections on the subject matter and the purpose of linguistics. Later, in the chapter on "Linguistic Value," page 112, we read: "There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language [which is] a link between thought and sound."—Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, tr. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).

And to cite an equally famous passage (among linguists, if not among English teachers), we read in Bloomfield, page 24, of the fact that a speech community comes into being when one uses language to influence the behavior of another. When Jill requires Jack to climb the fence to get her an apple: "*Language enables one person to make a reaction when another person has the stimulus*." Bloomfield considers this insight important enough to put it in italics because it states the role of language as vicarious reality.—Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

The New Rhetorics: I hope I have now prepared the way for a really new claim. We should study language for its ability to produce changes in the mind of the receiver. Applied to the teaching of writing, this claim means that we should learn to identify forms by their rhetorical impact. At least in Western languages, the subject/predicate/complement construction takes the form it does because that seems the natural way to organize reality (*i.e.*, experience held in common with other users of the language). This approach to the sentence makes more sense to the student than the definition "a group of words expressing a complete thought." (If that is so, then what is a paragraph?)

In the context of written exposition, the sentence limits itself to making a statement representing a point of view, an interpretation, an arrangement of reality, that the writer wishes the reader to accept or to understand. By bringing about this acceptance or understanding, the writer hopes to bring the reader closer to his point of view than was true before the sentence was written and read, before the new interpretation was shared through the medium of language.

Now I am ready to discuss those books that I promised before I began to denigrate the popular handbooks. They all have in common the happy assumption that the student already knows how to write, since he knows how to talk, and he can put words into writing. Like M. Jordain, he has unwittingly been committing prose all his life, and the teacher has only to help the student edit his writing into structure by folding the stream of speech into the verbal patterns conforming to the reader's assumptions.

Here I do not mean the books of so-called creative release like Ken McCrorie's popular antinomian credos. No matter how much rapport a teacher might be able to build with the student through making common cause against the Establishment, the beginning writer still has to practice patterns of sentence and paragraph if his writing is ever to go beyond a more or less eloquent self-expression. Self-expression is communication only to the reader who is already converted.

First on the list, then, because least pretentious, is a book that was winning a following until the call for basics frightened people away from its informal procedure. This book is Peter Elbow's *Writing without Teachers* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973) available in paperback, "dedicated to those people who actually use it—not just read it." At first glance, this book seems to teach writing by non-directive counseling, but Elbow firmly distinguishes his method from the practice of therapy: everyone has to write, and produce on a schedule.

Elbow's method requires a small group. Six is the optimum size, but for the regular fifty-minute classroom hour, four or five is better. Everyone comes to class with a copy of his work for everyone else. Everyone reads everyone else's work in turn, and everyone comments on everyone else's work. The comment takes the form of holistic reactions, which can be quite impressionistic and inarticulate ("This makes me feel bleah.") as long as the commentor pinpoints the passage that makes him feel that way. The author has to be accepting, but also can insist on his own view.

I have used Elbow's book and his method in my own classes and I testify that the results are startling. For one thing, it is possible to discuss full-length essays and get such perceptive comments that the authors revise essays thoroughly. This is possible because the group is busy building their essays over several weeks of mutual criticism, and they do not feel it a strain to absorb the ever-longer versions from one meeting to the next. The many copies required by the routine present no problem now that the college library has photocopying machines for five cents a page.

Elbow's routines actually eliminate the teacher in his conventional role. I never do any more than take notes on what everyone says about the work under discussion. Then when I meet the student alone later, all I have to do is point to the notes, and the student readily accepts the criticism of his peers. I have no problem motivating the student to do further revisions. The method is very popular with the class, who value the personal attention of an audience they can see and respect.

I think the Elbow book can lead into some problems. A group of peers giving mutual criticism is only able to improve the writing to their own degree of knowledge and sophistication. Also, the book is impossible to use in a course that must follow a syllabus requiring a specified amount of grammar, or reading, or so many words to be written by a given date.

But these are not problems in themselves. They are only problems to the teacher who lets these facts bother him. Essentially the Elbow routine is a self-discovery process, and its gains are more

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important than the losses in a conventional course procedure. The students come to class. That in itself is a startling innovation. They pay close attention to the written text. They argue together about alternative expressions. And without any intervention from the teacher, the prose gradually takes on form. To a teacher weary in the old routines, the change in the course is almost frightening.

But I would not recommend Elbow's practices for every class. The book works well only with a committed group. I have had my best results with students in advanced placement classes. Students in the usual composition class just do not have the sophistication nor even the knowledge to use the method well. The average freshman can't recognize good writing when he sees it, and he doesn't know how to spell, and he makes errors in sentence form. He feels insecure and lost at the challenge Elbow presents. Elbow developed his methods through working with adult volunteers.

Excursus on Mechanics: As I said some time ago, basic mechanics are a separate skill. It is a mistake to include them in a writing course. But we do have to deal with the problem. Frankly, I think we give ourselves and our students a lot of unnecessary grief because we insist on puristic usage. Only long experience as a steadily practicing writer will develop the awareness of nuance and tone, the style, that we find so lacking in our students' work. So we should concentrate on the expressions that are unequivocally wrong, illiterate, ungrammatical.

With the increasing practice of sectioning freshmen into classes according to their grammatical skills, the teacher's job is simpler than it used to be. The average composition student on the middle level shows a limited array of characteristic errors. I deal with them by pointing them out during small-group discussion. The class always recognizes them as soon as they are pointed out, and they make for a relaxed humorous atmosphere as the group jokes together about its errors. And I do not accept the written work until the error is corrected. I have always found this to be enough. The solution for students with a more serious problem, of course, is one-on-one tutoring and drill. This solution must wait as usual for a bigger budget from the dean.

Return from Excursus: So what the average class needs is not workbook drill on errors. Instead, we need an approach that will allow plenty of small-group discussion but that will also provide some elementary advice about essay form. In my opinion the very best book for the average composition class is John Herum and D. W. Cummings' *Writing; Plans, Drafts, & Revisions* (New York: Random House, 1971) available in paperback. Essentially this is a write-and-revise book, with specific advice about how to convert rough draft into finished prose.

As with Elbow's book, the beauty of Herum and Cummings' is the way it takes the curse off the chore of writing. The average student sits down before a blank page with the sinking conviction that he can never write anything to match the Platonic form of a "composition theme" floating balefully over his desk. Our teachers' cult of the perfectly rounded artifact has defeated the student before he begins. But both of these books open with advice on free writing: just scribble ahead in the blind faith that somehow you will commit prose.

Free writing is a lot more complicated than just blind scribbling. The student needs advice and guidance on what to scribble about, on the kind of mental set he should put himself into before he begins, the sort of readers he should keep in mind as he writes. But the advice to write freely without concern for the final form liberates the student from his pressing anxiety about a plan and lets him learn to enjoy the pleasure of talking on paper. *He needs to know that the teacher approves of what he is doing right now, and not just what he might someday achieve.*

In both Elbow and Herum and Cummings, the student finds examples of student work in the early stages of drafting, snarls of written gabble. And then the books take the student through the process of re-writing that saves the best, draws out its implications, finds the support for the weak spots, and finally grows into a supple length of articulated paragraphs. The process works like this: get a lot of draft on paper, draft until you run dry, let it rest, and draft some more, ignoring convention, keeping the flow; then when it is cold, go back over it with a critical eye, playing the role of unknown reader, to pick out leading ideas (especially the repeated ideas), throw them into prominence, and arrange details for support. Herum and Cummings are much more explicit about how to do this than is Elbow, or any other book I know, and they also have some simplified strategies of verbal analysis to show the student how to transform his prose. The useful "idea machine" and the "inside-outside outline" show that Herum and Cummings have had a lot of practice with students' responses to their method.

A unique feature of Herum and Cummings is the chapter on how to take notes and how to use them once you have them. They are advocates of the scrapbook school of writing: carry around 3×5 cards and jot down anything that looks good to take home and feed into the idea machine and the draft-and-revise process. This is the only textbook I know that admits how most professional writers go to work and shows the student pragmatic ways of handling typical writing problems.

The next book I want to share is used by Herum and Cummings. This is Jean Guitton's *A Student's Guide to Intellectual Work* (Notre Dame, Ind.: The Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1966) available in paperback. Strictly speaking this is not a book about freshman composition. It first appeared in France in 1951 as *Le travail intellectuel* (Aubier Editiones Montaigne, Paris), and was written as the result of the author's musings on the propensity of intellectuals to continue their work even while living in German concentration camps during World War II. The book serves as an introduction to the psychology of the creative process, especially verbal creation.

Guitton is good for composition classes, if only because, being French, he thinks of intellectual work as written work. The intellectual French no matter what the academic discipline do not feel the work complete until written down so any intelligent person can understand it. Would we were all more literately Francophile! The book speaks in general terms of working and resting, inventing and organizing one's inventions, writing and editing, as a rhythm of creation open to the humblest endeavors: "the first work tool . . . is a table on which he can spread things out;" "the Word stammers in all of you." Guitton has a chapter on "Writing and Style" that supports Herum and Cummings' advice on drafting and editing. He keeps advising: work diligently, trust and respect yourself, commit yourself to a process and don't worry about goals.

Now we come to a more ambitious book that pays deeper attention to the act of creation. Writing is one version of the process of solving problems and discovering new ideas; and this book gets explicit about putting problem-solving into verbal form. The book is *Rhetoric: Discovery & Change*, by Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth

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Pike (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), and has enjoyed a *succes d'estime* without rousing a widespread response. At the home school of its authors, the University of Michigan, the book is used mainly on the engineering campus in a senior-year capstone course in humanities.

But I have used the book with remedial freshman classes. Though unconventional, it does not talk down, nor does it talk above the students' comprehension. After all, the freshman can't know whether or not any book is unconventional; he has no experience of other books for comparison. And a hard book should present no problems with a remedial class, because remedial classes are not stupid; they just have bad writing habits. I think one reason the book has not sold better is that teachers rather than classes are uneasy with its new approach, not that the book is "difficult," or "obscure," or "abstruse."

This new approach is just the approach I have been recommending. The book offers a series of axioms (literally, axioms) about topic-finding and topic-developing. The authors assume that these axioms express universal truths about how our minds segment and categorize our experience. But rather than being derivations from Aristotle's categories and topics, and Cicero's and Quintilian's invention and disposition, these axioms do not derive from but are at the base of Kenneth Pike's tagmemic rationale of particle, wave, and field. See "Exhibit B" (page 17) for a fuller description.

Such an approach rouses the English teachers' prejudices that I explained in my opening. Because it introduces an inductive science (linguistics) among the humanities (the literary act), such a book disgusts those who repudiate a schematic hierarchy requiring them to learn a discipline different from the metaphysical mystique of the imaginative artifact.

But even so this book is as humane as the characteristically human behavior at the source of its axioms. After all, language liberates us from our environment while creating a new one of its own. Speech enables one person to respond to a stimulus affecting another person. Linguists are beginning to understand how speech acts to bridge the alienation between individuals by the means of language as a universal cultural personality, the speaking subject emanating into forms objective enough for the listening subject to experience and to relate to himself.

This is noble and exciting work, the capturing of the rhythms of consciousness in forms explicit enough to diagram, to assign, to practice on paper. *Rhetoric: Discovery & Change* does actually rehearse psycholinguistic patterns in verbal forms of sentence, paragraph, and essay. And far from being a prescriptive routine compelling all users to follow arbitrary rules, this book inculcates tagmemic modules that ramify indefinitely outward into all cultural areas. Consider again the implications of "Exhibit B."

I want to repeat that this book works in the classroom. All routines build up from simpler writing assignments. Every section of the book has appropriate readings, usually short enough for the student to believe that she might achieve something similar. And the book gives assignments, and examples of students' work in response to those assignments, students' work flawed and in need of revision, with advice on how to emend.

Perhaps the single most practical feature of this book is its work on paragraph revision. It does not offer canned examples of Pollyanna prose illustrating logical paragraph types (classification, comparison and contrast, definition, etc.). Instead, it offers examples of the two most persistent and deep-rooted problems in student-writing: the rambling, overloaded sentence, and the involved paragraph clear to no one but its author. Both of these problems are conceptual problems; the student has not yet learned to manipulate syntax as an exercise in problem-solving.

Rhetoric: Discovery & Change is basic at opposite ends of the spectrum of cultural awareness. It identifies our basic experiential modules of analysis, and it shows how to express them in linguistic patterns as fundamental as the sentence and the paragraph.

There are similar books with a more general purpose, books appropriate to use as companion texts for the rhetoric, as readers to shape the students' awareness (and incidentally to shape the teachers' awareness) and ready them for the actual practice of rhetorical modules in writing.

The first such book I want to describe and recommend is the short introductory *Structuralism*, by Jean Piaget, tr. Chaninah Maschler (New York: Basic Books, 1970). This book represents the findings of Jean Piaget's research in cognition, in the sequences of children's formation and arrangement of concepts. The book does not report Piaget's actual work with children. Instead it abstracts the routines of concept-formation as a guide to intellectual work, and suggests applications in various academic disciplines. Without mentioning names, this book makes clear its debt to the phenomenologists. Yet it proceeds quickly through its brief scope to make stimulating suggestions in deceptively simple prose. With instructor's guidance, this book is comprehensible to the average class.

Two books by Edward T. Hall also make useful classroom readers: *The Silent Language* (Fawcett Premier, 1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (Doubleday Anchor, 1969). Hall bases his work on the same analytic assumptions as we find with Pike and the linguists. Indeed, the schema for cultural analysis ("Exhibit C," page 18) was inspired by Trager and Smith's rationale for the identification of phonemes. *The Silent Language* pioneers in psycholinguistics, analyzing and classifying the means of non-verbal communication, including such obvious practices as gesture and facial expression, and further inventing valid categories of assumed meanings like ways of organizing schedules and modes of teaching by imitation and practice rather than indoctrination. The second book, *The Hidden Dimension*, develops the theory of implicit categories of meaning into the organization of space like the differing arrangements of furniture, of city planning, even of informal conversation from one culture to another.

Another good reader for students (and teachers) would be Martin Joos's *The Five Clocks* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967). This elegant booklet disposes once and for all of the usage question. Really it is a mini-course in linguistics applied to writing, and it works by identifying the intersections between the social occasions for using language and the linguistic conventions appropriate to those occasions. This matrix of social and grammatical vectors is not unusual in itself; Joos's contribution is to show that all linguistic categories operate in idiomatic forms in each conventional social situation.

Joos's diagram should help make this clear—("Exhibit D," page 20). On the intimate level, vocabulary and grammar are implicit; and communication transpires through emotive sounds (pet-names, baby-talk, grunts at breakfast, yawns before bed); but the sounds follow the rhythm and inflection of the suprasegmental phonemes. Vocabulary and grammar can be fitted in at will. The intimate level has all others implicit within it.

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	Contrast	Variation	Distribution
PARTICLE	1) View the unit as an isolated, static entity. What are its contrastive features, i.e., the features that differentiate it from similar things and serve to identify it?	4) View the unit as a specific variant form of the concept, i.e., as one among a group of instances that illustrate the concept. What is the *range* of physical variation of the concept, i.e., how can instances vary without becoming something else?	7) View the unit as part of a larger context. How is it appropriately or typically classified? What is its typical position in a temporal sequence? In space, i.e., in a scene or geographical array. In a system of classes?
WAVE	2) View the unit as a dynamic object or event. What physical features distinguish it from similar objects or events? In particular, what is its nucleus?	5) View the unit as a dynamic process. How is it changing?	8) View the unit as a part of a larger, dynamic context. How does it interact with and merge into its environment? Are its borders clearcut or indeterminate?
FIELD	3) View the unit as an abstract, multidimensional system. How are the components organized in relation to one another? More specifically, how are they related by class, in class systems, in temporal sequence, and in space?	6) View the unit as a multidimensional physical system. How do particular instances of the system vary?	9) View the unit as an abstract system within a larger system. What is its position in the larger system? What systemic features and components make it a part of the larger system?

From Young, Becker, and Pike, *Rhetoric, Discovery & Change* [EXHIBIT B]

Another innovation is Joos's inventive exercise in précis-writing. He requires a student to write a plot summary of *Tristan and Isolde*—on one page, within conventional typing margins, double-spaced. The rest of the exercise is to re-write the précis in progressively fewer words. As the summary cramps down to a hundred words, then fifty, the style changes drastically as the student is forced to fit the same material into more and more implicit grammatical expressions. Clauses disappear with their easy, expansive subject/predicate disposition of material. Participial and absolute phrases pop out of the limbo of the student's implicit grammatical potential and into desperate practice on the page. No longer can the student treat everything more or less alike. She is forced into decisions about priorities: motives, cause-and-effect, values.

I have had fascinating results with Joos's précis exercise. Working with the nursery tale of "Jack and the Beanstalk," the class begins with a rigorously narrative treatment; I forbid them to impute motives or draw a moral. By the end of the series of re-writes, with the events reduced to fifty or even twenty-five words, everyone has produced a different story. And the differences reflect important assumptions about human nature, motives for action, and conventional conduct.

I think my experience with Joos's précis exercise can suggest an important distinction between narrative and expository writing. And I think this distinction valid between exposition and any of the modes with primary reference to the world outside the mind. I do not mean merely the obvious distinction that narration and description refer to time and space while exposition refers to the inner world of ideas and values. Obviously stories and poems are saturated with ideas and values. No, the deeper difference between exposition and other modes inheres in its use of language to set up hierarchies of assent. The expository writer, whether purveying information or arguing for a point of view, necessarily slants his material according to his estimate of the reader's preparation and readiness. And those assumptions inevitably assign the implicit values to subordinate roles in sentence, paragraph, and essay. The writer always talks as if a great deal had already been agreed, and those implicit assents are tucked away in supportive or subordinate structures. (Consider in this respect the chapter "The Layout of Arguments," in Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958), especially pp. 94-113.)

But to resume my list of recommended readers for students, I want to mention W. Nelson Francis' *The English Language; An Introduction; Background for Writing* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963). The title is precise. The book is a linguistic primer based on Francis' large text for beginning linguists, and proceeds by first teaching linguistic basics and then suggesting assignments to apply them. The book dates back to the rhetorical fashion of the '60s with their rage for relevance. One of the sound proposals of that academic fad was the proposal to write about language in the composition course. After all, culture comes into being, survives, and changes through language. Linguistics is a peculiarly appropriate discipline for awakening the student to the social meaning generated by his habits of speech and thought.

Self-Instruction for Teachers: While I am discussing books, I want to suggest some for instructors as well as for students. By now it has become commonplace that the typical composition instuctor has had no training in his work, but is assumed to be able to teach writing because he majored in English. The following books will cor-

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rect some misinformation and start the teacher on some useful classroom routines.

H. A. Gleason, Jr., wrote *Linguistics and English Grammar* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965) to serve this very purpose, to correct misinformation and to suggest useful classroom routines in the teaching of writing. In essence the book updates the typical outmoded 18th-century school grammar still haunting our English classrooms. This

Primary Message Systems	Interactional 0	Organizational 1	Economic 2	Sexual 3
Interaction 0	Communication Vocal qualifiers Kinesics Language 00	Status and Role 01	Exchange 02	How the sexes interact 03
Association 1	Community 10	Society Class Caste Government 11	Economic roles 12	Sexual roles 13
Subsistence 2	Ecological community 20	Occupational groupings 21	Work Formal work Maintenance Occupations 22	Sexual division of labor 23
Bisexuality 3	Sex community (clans, sibs) 30	Marriage groupings 31	Family 32	The Sexes Masc. vs. Fem. Sex ((biological) Sex (technical) 33
Territoriality 4	Community territory 40	Group territory 41	Economic areas 42	Men's and women's territories 43
Temporality 5	Community cycles 50	Group cycles 51	Economic cycles 52	Men's and women's cyclical activities 53
Learning 6	Community lore—what gets taught and learned 60	Learning groups—educational institutions 61	Reward for teaching and learning 62	What the sexes are taught 63
Play 7	Community play—the arts and sports 70	Play groups—teams and troupes 71	Professional sports and entertainment 72	Men's and women's play. fun, and games 73
Defense 8	Community defenses—structured defense systems 80	Defense groups—armies, police, public health, organized religion 81	Economic patterns of defense 82	What the sexes defend (home, honor, etc.) 83
Exploitation 9	Communication networks 90	Organizational networks (cities, building groups, etc.) 91	Food, resources, and industrial equipment 92	What men and women are concerned with and own 93

[EXHIBIT C] from Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*

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grammar is not so much mistaken (though much of it *is* mistaken through its false analogy between English and Latin) as it is inadequate and biased. So Gleason works by correcting what the typical English teacher thinks he knows into what the linguist has learned.

This updated grammatical knowledge bears directly on the teaching of writing because much writing-teaching consists of the inculcation of absurd rules: don't begin a sentence with *and* or

Territorial	Temporal	Instructional	Recreational	Protective	Exploitational
4	5	6	7	8	9
Places of *interaction*	Times of interaction	Teaching and learning	Participation in the arts and sports (active and passive)	Protecting and being protected	Use of telephones, signals, writing, etc.
04	05	06	07	08	09
Local group roles	Age groups roles	Teachers and learners	Entertainers and athletics	Protectors (doctors, clergy, soldiers, police, etc.)	Use of group property
14	15	16	17	18	19
Where the individual eats, cooks, etc.	When the individual eats, cooks, etc.	Learning from working	Pleasure from working	Care of health, protection of livelihood	Use of foods, resources, and equipment
24	25	26	27	28	29
Areas assigned to individuals by virtue of sex	Periods assigned to individuals by virtue of sex	Teaching and learning sex roles	Participation in recreation by sex	Protection of sex and fertility	Use of sex differentiating decoration and adornment
34	35	36	37	38	39
Space Formal space Informal space Boundaries	Scheduling of space	Teaching and learning individual space assignments	Fun, playing games, etc., in terms of space	Privacy	Use of fences and markers
44	45	46	47	48	49
Territorially determined cycles	Time Sequence Cycles Calendar	When the individual learns	When the individual plays	Rest, vacations, holidays	Use of time-telling devices, etc.
54	55	56	57	58	59
Places for learning	Scheduling of learning (group)	Enculturation Rearing Informal learning Education	Making learning fun	Learning self-defense and to stay healthy	Use of training aids
64	65	66	67	68	69
Recreational areas	Play seasons	Instructional play	Recreation Fun Playing Games	Exercise	Use of recreational materials (playthings)
74	75	76	77	78	79
What places are defended	The When of defense	Scientific, religious, and military training	Mass exercises and military games	Protection Formal defenses Informal defenses Technical defenses	Use of materials for protection
84	85	86	87	88	89
Property—what is *enclosed*, counted, and measured	What periods are measured and recorded	School buildings, training aids, etc.	Amusement and sporting goods and their industries	Fortifications, armaments, medical equipment, safety devices	Material Systems Contact w/ environment Motor habits Technology
94	95	96	97	98	99

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[EXHIBIT D] From Martin Joos, *The Five Clocks*

Here are, in order of importance, four of the usage-scales of native central English:

AGE	STYLE	BREADTH	RESPONSIBILITY
senile	frozen	genteel	best
mature	formal	puristic	better
teenage	consultative	standard	good
child	casual	provincial	fair
baby	intimate	popular	bad

end with a preposition, never use the first person, avoid the passive voice, always write complex sentences (*i.e.*, with clauses). Gleason's linguistic alternatives to such shabby shibboleths directly aid the writing teacher because *linguistics* is *not* grammar. Instead, it is an awareness of how language hangs together, using semiotic patterns to express cultural purposes.

Gleason's advice that I have used most often concerns the front-loaded sentence. A front-loaded sentence jots down everything as it comes into the student's mind with no concern for syntax. The student tacks on a verb at the end to avoid a fragmentary sentence. Here is Gleason's example: "If what going to a clearly not very adequately staffed school really means is little appreciated, we should be concerned." (p. 442) Gleason gives six pages to a step-by-step explanation of how the sentence got that way and how we can retrieve it. These six pages are one part of a chapter labeled "Clarity, Redundancy, and Ambiguity," a chapter giving equal care to other causes of gummy prose like "poor transition" and "weighting of choices."

The book as a whole divides into three main parts. The first, "Historical Background," shows the difference between school-grammar and linguistics, and supplies a very brief résumé of structural and transformational grammar. The second part, "Topics in English Syntax," goes through nine topics of school-grammar to update them and show them in their true nature; this is the heart of the book, full of reliable advice for the practicing teacher. Inevitably it requires considerable re-training on the part of the teacher to learn several new terms and symbols. But when she has done, the teacher has a solid understanding of areas that have previously been handled in the folk-lore of the staff room. The third main part is "Points of Contact and Implications," a vague title meant to cover the relationships between grammar and literature, and between grammar and style. While not as immediately pragmatic as part two, this part also disperses many venerable mists about the inner nature of English as distinct from other languages, about the nature of style (hitherto regarded as a cultic impressionistic hallmark), and about the contribution of linguistics to the teaching of composition. Without doubt, Gleason's *Linguistics and English Grammar* should be the inseparable companion for any teacher who wants to know what he is trying to do in the composition classroom. It is simply invaluable.

After reading this book, the teacher might well teach herself a few linguistic basics. The best way is to organize a small circle for reading and discussing an introductory text. Serviceable ones have been written by Gleason and by Francis; other useful authors are Charles Hockett and Andreas Koutsoudas for actual grammatical structures, and Francis P. Dineen for a more general historical study. The single most useful book might well be Norman C. Stageberg and Ralph Goodman's *An Introductory English Grammar; With a chapter on transformational grammar by Ralph Goodman* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965). It is widely used in undergraduate courses in structural grammar. It delivers knowledge immediately useful to the classroom teacher while it cues into the more specialized books just mentioned. Once into the field, the teacher will discover dozens of books limited to topics in composition like stylistics, sentence-formation, and tagmemic structures beyond the sentence. But to succeed, the group needs the guidance of a person with at least some linguistic expertise. A few graduate schools of English have begun to require seminars like this of their TAs. The purpose is not to learn grammar as such, but to become familiar with linguistic basics for their application to the teaching of writing.

A summer institute in linguistics would be a still more satisfying way to begin. These are no more expensive than any other summer vacation, and are found on attractive campuses from Hawaii to Syracuse. The most reliable is the annual institute offered by the Linguistic Society of America, offering courses for both the specialist and the beginner. And it moves from one host to another, so one can wait until it moves near home.

Dispelling Shibboleths: But the important thing is not the book or system chosen. The important thing is that one can find categories for the teaching of writing, that these categories can carry the student through a hierarchy of writing modules, and that the hierarchy measures ability more effectively than does a set of evaluative rules.

So let me once more rehearse the orthodox objections from my colleagues when I preach this behaviorist evangel (now older than many of the objectors). I quote from a recent session: "We aren't miracle men!"; "How could I face teachers in other departments if I gave an A for poor writing?"; "What about the imagination?" These verbatim quotations reflect the self-defeating assumptions with which I opened this essay. I will try to meet them once again as I close.

First, the cry: "We aren't miracle men!" English teachers cry this when they hear people with some linguistic training make claims about the teaching of writing that the English teachers know they cannot make about their own writing classes. If the English teacher doesn't know how to teach writing, he should learn, and that means he should be willing to consider the possibility that simple behavioral routines can produce modest but definite improvements in writing skills. Nobody can achieve miracles, but such gains look miraculous to the English teacher caught in his cult of the literary artifact.

But when I speak of modest gains, the second cry accuses me of professional misconduct: "How could I face teachers in other departments if I gave an A for poor writing?" This orthodox objection supports the first in mutual self-defeat. The English teacher fears that behavioral routines will not produce writing good enough for an A. And that fear arises because he does not believe in the existence of behavioral routines. And yet he must give a few A's at least once in a while, just for morale—his own as much as that of the student.

And so we come to the third orthodox objection: "What about the imagination?" Well, what *about* the imagina-

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tion? My orthodox colleagues tell me that the imagination is the "*je ne sais quoi*" (and that's a quote) setting the A-theme apart from "the ruck" (and that's a quote). Then I ask them if they can justify giving a grade for a quality in writing that they can't teach but can only descry by its fugitive serendipitous gleams. Their response to that is to return to their first objection: "We aren't miracle men!"

Well, I can only say that I think the English teacher mistaken to give an A to work that she cannot explain. Of course the A rewards the student in the classic manner of operant conditioning, in the sense that he gets a reward for behavior that was fortuitous in its first phase. But the whole point of operant conditioning is that the student contributes to his own growth through his growing understanding of the process he practices. He cannot grow in understanding if the teacher is unable to explain to him what he did right in the first place. Besides, we aren't teaching for the Pulitzer Prize. An A should recognize writing that happens with fair frequency in class.

But I don't mean to suggest that a hierarchy of writing modules does anything all by itself. I had better anticipate some misconceptions. A behavioral routine is always open-ended. While the teacher should know productive strategies for the student to learn, the teacher cannot know where the behavioral routine will lead. Operant conditioning is self-directing, structured to reward behavior that supports the growth of the system, but not the end of the system, where end means prescriptive goal. See Piaget on structuralism. The teacher and the student and the nature of the process being practiced all contribute toward the growth of the system. Nothing works unless everyone works.

So this is my last point. Grades are irrelevant. Once the writing routines are going productively, we can stencil any grade grid we want to stencil across the routines. Unless we train the comp staff in reliable reading, as a few of us were trained at the ETS reading tables, our grades will continue to be subjective. We can do with them as we will. But we should not delude ourselves that a Platonic description of a grade-level will produce an actual essay at that level. Good writing comes from habit, and habit comes from the daily practice of productive routines. The teacher had better learn some, or the dean will take the comp course out of the English department and give it to the remedial clinic. And we'll all be out of a job. □

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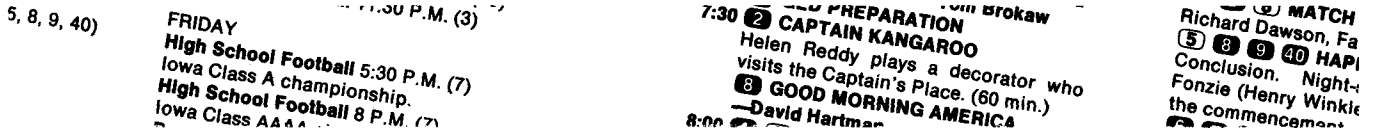

STEPHEN HEARST:

TELEVISION

A TRANSATLANTIC INTERVIEW WITH THE NAR'S KENNETH LASH IN WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF BBC RADIO THREE REMINISCES & LOOKS FORWARD ON THE VISUAL MEDIUM

Although I met Stephen Hearst in England last spring and discussed some of the issues raised here I did not at that time "interview" him. That idea came later. Most of the interview was done by tape recording, plus an overseas telephone call to clarify certain comments. Thus what follows is not the usual give-and-take kind of interview. It consists rather in his responding to a set of questions. That method has its limitations—as does the NAR budget, which did not run to my flying over in person—but not in terms of hearing Mr. Hearst's voice, which we think comes through clearly. I missed being able to raise spontaneous issues and even to insert a rejoinder or two, but there it is, and only in one instance have I felt it necessary to insert a last-minute counterweight to an opinion expressed by Mr. Hearst. My view, of course, is necessarily abstract, is that of someone with limited experience in the field. Mr. Hearst has literally worlds of experience, not to mention clearly exceptional abilities. It was a pleasure to talk with him; it's a pleasure to bring him to NAR readers.—K.L.

You ask: Do I believe that television as a medium is harmful now and potentially very dangerous for the future? It's very difficult to be answering this without being conscious that what one is doing is making assertions which are extremely difficult to prove. The evidence is inconclusive. What I conclude from my direct experience, which I then submit to my own attempts at common sense, is this: In *this* country the average viewing time for an adult is something like 19 to 20 hours a week. In America it's well over 30 hours. In *this* country young people between the ages of 8 to 14 watch for an average of 25 hours a week. This seems to me an enormous amount of time, and by and large I believe that the conditions under which the millions of young people and adults in both Britain and America watch television encourage a degree of passivity, a degree of effortlessness, which I cannot but view with concern. What is happening in *this* country? I would imagine the effect to be more widespread in America because by and large I have to assert, and I hope it isn't arrogant, that the quality of our programs is on the whole very much higher than that in the United States. By this I mean that a) the technical quality of the pictures is very much better and, b) the actual program content is better. Now it is difficult to make these comparisons because there are whole areas of American television that are absolutely first rate. But by and large I believe the assertion to be correct, and I'm not happy in making it. What makes American and British television difficult to compare is that we have only three program chains, and on any given night we have well over half the population watching a succession of visual images. I cannot believe that the common experience of millions of people sharing the alternatives of three visual images which deny them other experiences of an enormously various kind, can be necessarily considered a public good. It strikes me that when you are a television producer, you are commanding a degree of attention which has not been vouchsafed to the most powerful Holy Roman emperor at the height of his powers nor to the most powerful pope at the zenith of the powers of the papacy—for example, Innocent III at the beginning of the thirteenth century. None of these rulers could command comparable attention, because the technology wasn't available. Now, there are several hundred young men and women in Britain and America who have the extraordinary power to enter into people's homes and to display their skills and talents there. Ordinarily it never enters their heads to consider that they could do possible harm. But since television commands so much attention, is a rival to the press, and is seriously regarded in universities as a possible threat to literacy—I think that the very least that people working in television should do is to imagine the *possibility* that they are doing harm.

Now I realize that to say this is almost total hypocrisy if you have your living to make in a purely commercial setting like American television. Therefore one must say that it is in effect an additional argument for public service broadcasting that those of us who are engaged in it and whose jobs do not depend on ratings, and whose jobs do not depend on whether the next series is a success or a failure, ought at least to be clear that we are here to serve the public and that we ought at least to conceive the possibility that not everything we do is of first-rate quality. Therefore, we ought to make clear what the value judgments are that underlie our actions and processes.

I also feel that the very least we as television producers should do is to make available to the ordinary public the

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grammar of images which we employ in making programs. It does seem to me at least arguable that literacy requires a degree of structured education in learning the grammar of your language which has its equivalent in the grammar of pictures—what is it that is being done to us? What is being done to our perceptions when these pictures flow? What happens to an event which is shown without soundtrack? What happens when the same event is shown against music? What different views do I arrive at in the same event if it is shown by two cameras or only one camera? If I use jump cuts or use long panning shots? It seems to me that from a fairly early age as a public servant I ought to be able to tell the general public precisely what the means are which we are employing *daily* in making our programs. Nobody who reads a novel has not actually had years of learning to read, of learning the grammar of his language, behind him, and yet we're being almost drowned by a medium in which the very gimmicks that we use are deliberately kept back by the television producers because they are means to keep the public attention, riveting you, and they're daily employed in commercials and daily employed in trails and daily employed in series or westerns. And it seems to me that we would at least be the wiser for being ourselves as well informed as those who beam their messages at us.

In America by and large there are enormous commercial pressures, and the absolute need to maximize audience at peak times—which is a terrible constraint on broadcasting choices and broadcasting freedoms. It is an economic constraint, and one doesn't have to be a Marxist in order to say this. But in the underdeveloped world, the Third World—in the totalitarian world, I don't even need to stress that television is wholly an instrument of propaganda or, if you like, of ideological education—and in the Third World it is largely in the hands of ministers of information so that a genuine independent broadcasting virtually cannot be said to exist. So that when you think of the potentialities of this medium and the ways it is being used, it cannot be called either free or independent.

Now to your second question: Is it the medium itself or is it, as many seem to think, a matter of programming, the way television is currently being used? There is of course a world of distance between programming in different countries, and there is a great deal to be done in programming which is partly educational—and you're all, of course, in America, familiar with educational broadcasting—but the great difference, I think, between a good deal of what might be called educational programming in America and Britain is that in America it's deadly earnest and it wholly differs in style from all other broadcasting. When I first made television programs and I told American friends what I was doing, they all assumed I was in educational broadcasting, and I was *not*. I made films about classical Greece and I thought I was doing this in a documentary and an entertaining fashion, and it didn't occur to me that I was actually educating people. I believe in education by stealth, and this has never been a concept which ever found favor in America. When "Civilization" was first made I don't think that the heads of the networks wanted to know, because they believed this to be a kind of broadcasting that would be appreciated only by very few people. When Alistair Cooke's "America" then came to America it turned out that a similar kind of broadcasting, telling the history of America, was of interest to millions of people and it was underestimating your audience to believe that you had necessarily to be terribly earnest and were educating them—that it is possible to educate and to amuse and to inform at the same time, but you've got to be fairly skillful at it. So programming can make the most enormous difference to the level of consciousness that you raise in your audience.

Where I begin to wonder about the nature of the medium is when I come up against its limitations. I do believe that there is nothing to beat television for science programs, nothing to beat it for natural history or geography programs, for certain types of light entertainment, for certain types of drama. I believe, however, that we all proceed as if the frontiers of television were continously being pushed back by the inventiveness of our producers and there are virtually no limitations to it. I believe it has very great limitations.

I do not believe that television can be a total replacement for reading books. The great difficulty and difference between reading for myself and picking up whatever complex message—and I believe that fundamentally visual images are necessarily less complex, although they may contain a great deal of information—the difference is that comprehension in the one case proceeds at the speed at which I want it to proceed as a reader, and it cannot proceed at the speed at which I want it to proceed on television because is necessarily an act of force which proceeds at the speed of the television producer and the speed of the image. If you have a piece of film, for example, and you accompany this piece of film with words, the maximum number of words that you can actually get into a minute, to be understandable, is roughly 180, so that there is an upper limit of words that you can actually put into the medium. Thus the fundamental difference, to define it differently, would be to say that radio and television are confined in time but not in space, whereas print is confined in space but not in time, because its comprehension is at the command of the reader.

I now come to your third question, and some of it I have already answered: Television can undoubtedly be an effective educational tool, but again there is not enough evidence available for us to say definitely whether it itself is very effective as an educational tool. We have, for example, a unique educational institution, namely the Open University, which started some years ago. It's a totally independent university of the air, staffed by the academics who are wholly independent and have their own organization, and who work in close harmony with BBC producers who remain on the BBC staff but do not have the editorial independence that they possess as BBC producers. The producers are in fact translators of the educational material that is being provided for them by the staff of the Open University, which they then make into radio and television

STEPHEN HEARST is director of the BBC Radio Three. During his many years as a BBC television producer he was guiding spirit behind such programs as "America" and "Civilization." KENNETH LASH has, in recent months, become NAR's farthest-flung contributing editor. The interview printed here is drawn largely verbatim from taped responses to Mr. Lash's questions, and from a telephone conversation between the two men.

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"I believe in education by stealth . . ."

programs. The general networks of both radio and television are being used for the transmission of programs for students who enroll and who in addition to the viewing of radio and television programs have to do a fair amount of reading and studying of written material; they have to write—it is, in other words, a correspondence university course, and at the end of a given number of years degrees are awarded for the successful candidates. So part of the effort of the Open University resides in correspondence courses and indeed in books, but part of it goes out on general networks of both radio and television services, and it would be very difficult to argue at the present moment that it is the broadcasting element which provides the success. It's fundamentally a course for adults who were denied previous educational opportunities to go to a university, who combine their studies in the open university with jobs in their spare time, and study in their spare time to get these degrees, and it is a most valuable new experimental tool.

But it would be rash to say that it is the broadcasting that makes it a success. Such people—and there are something like 50,000 to 60,000 students at any one time—such people are highly motivated. They did not go to a university when they were young, they now are able to obtain a university degree, they don't have to go anywhere but stay in their own homes. They will therefore do extra work, and they'll do written work, and they'll read books, and they'll write essays, and in addition there are these programs over the air. Certainly television *is* an adjunct to education, particularly in curricular matters. I have seen extremely valuable further educational programs (we call them "further education broadcasts") in language teaching, in which inventive visuals and good teachers were able to teach languages—foreign languages—to general viewers, and I also know that the BBC has made very determined efforts to deal with illiteracy. And indeed I was the chairman of the jury of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts last year, which awarded its equivalent of the Emmy Awards in America to a television program which dealt precisely with illiteracy, and by visual means taught people who had difficulty in reading, or cannot read at all, how to read. This was done on television and watched by a fair number of people. And it did help, and it is undoubtedly a way of helping to further the educationally handicapped in this country, and it can be used in any other country. There are many schools and pre-school broadcasting programs, particularly in such places as Italy, which attempt similar approaches to educationally underprivileged groups.

Can it visualize verbal concepts? you ask. Is it able to skip language barriers? Well, you have less experience in skipping language barriers than we have in Europe. And on the whole we have not been terribly good at skipping the language barrier, so that, although Eurovision, a network which joins all of us together in common programs, exists occasionally, one has to admit that the most successful attempt at Eurovision television programs are either games—competitive games—or particularly sport, and that when you attempt other programs, they have to be devised in such a way that the pictures remain precisely the same but a different commentator is available for each of the countries in a different language. We have, in other words, found it rather hard to skip the language barrier. And when you ask: Is television capable of visualizing verbal concepts? I revert to my original answer that there are, I believe, great limitations.

It seems to me that television is not very good, or images have not been invented, at defining or representing abstract concepts accurately. For that you need language. My fear is that what I perceive with my eyes is more powerful than what I hear with my ears, and that in a combined image of television and language that comes through television, it is more likely the image I remember than the words that go with it. Even if I see what we call "talking heads" and I have nothing else to look at except the close-up of a man or a woman, somehow or other their facial contours, the color of the tie they're wearing, act as an enormous distraction, and I find it on the whole hard to remember precisely what they were saying unless what they were saying was very memorable. Television seems to be marvelous as an analyzer of character, rather bad at dealing with any kind of abstractions. And since politics deals very largely with abstractions: liberty, equality, racialism—these are descriptions of attitudes or deeply buried beliefs or actions based on such beliefs, and it is relatively easy to talk about them—it is very difficult to put them into visual terms. And we're yet to behave, particularly in the news and current affairs areas, as if there weren't these limitations, or particularly as if those who write these programs are not aware of them.

I see, continously, current affairs programs in which what I'm being told in language is totally different from the picture that I see, particularly in foreign reports. If I hear about the attitudes of certain governments toward certain questions and what I see is a long shot of a street of the capital city and, say, the residence of the prime minister or the chancellor, and I'm being given at the same time an intricate foreign correspondent's report, what is being said and what I see have virtually no correlation. So that I have to say reluctantly if you show me virtually every evening a 15 minute report on the air of pictures combined with language, and I hear subsequently on the radio a 15 minute foreign affairs report which analyzes the identical situation, generally my understanding is much enhanced by the radio broadcast and on the whole not very much enhanced by the television program. That is an assertion again; it isn't a proof. It is simply based on long experience after now having worked for 20 years in television and six years in radio.

On the other hand, when you ask me *why* does television test character: If I see a man in public life who is being well interviewed and I see his face and I see his reactions I can tell whether he prevaricates. I can tell whether he is telling the truth. And I can't actually do this by his voice, for he can dissemble more easily in language than he can in pictures. To that extent I find television, as a test of character, rather interesting. I mean that last Nixon press conference—the way he tried to be polite to the press and never could, and showed his deep hatred—was something that one is grateful for. It couldn't have been described adequately in print.

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Union City, N.J.
IN DEFENSE OF HOME VIDEO
agree with David Lachenbruch that there's
whole new world out there in electron
ind ["Join the Home-Vi
ct. 15]
MICKEY MOUSE CLUB
A tap-dancer and a fiddler are the
guests on "Showtime Day."
5:30 2 4 8 CBS NEWS—Cronkite
3 8 40 ABC NEWS
—Reasoner/Walters
13 HEE HAW
MARY JANE ODELL
Dennis Weaver and singer Eddie Rab
bitt are the guests. Songs include "I'n

Your fourth question is about the additions to the medium—such as holographic images. As I understand holographic images, they will be three-dimensional, but they will still be as if they were in an aquarium or in a tank. Therefore you will get three-dimensional images in a defined area. I don't see that the making, or the coming to fruition, of three-dimensional images will fundamentally change the nature of the producer or the nature of the message which the producer sends to the viewer. It will still be the producer who sends the images; it will be the viewer who will receive them. He may even be more riveted by what he sees than he was before; he will not be any the less passive. He is not likely to discriminate more and be induced to turn off and think any more, so that what you will have is a possibly greater degree of realism, but not a change in the relationship. And it is a change in the relationship which seems to me essential. Even a change in the relationship between viewer and transmitting organization in which a viewer's button would change the program does not seem to me to amount to a great deal. There cannot be such a thing as a single viewer altering a program very much. There would always have to be, in order to make the broadcast commercially sustaining, a fair concentration of viewers, and no single individual would by himself be able to change the nature of the broadcast. You might feed into a computer the number of buttons pushed and you might get a different ending to a drama. I could see all this. But this seems to me merely a kind, at the moment—and I may be utterly wrong about this—a kind of sales gimmick of new techniques. I cannot see that this would actually make the process more democratic.

The sad truth about a great deal of mass communication, particularly of radio and television, is that both radio and television are fundamentally means of communication from the few to the many. This is how the financing of it is built up; this is how the technology is built up. If you make it a process by which the many talk to the many, well then you'll virtually arrive at the telephone. And undoubtedly we will have video telephones shortly; that is a totally separate thing altogether, and let us all have it, but that is no longer television and doesn't require skill, art, or production. If you want any kind of quality and you want to interest a great many people in quality programs, you need a great many skills. If these are discussed in terms of very small units—and the fashionable trend is to say that "small is beautiful"—it may well become more democratic and more available in my own neighborhood, but it is likely to be less good in quality. Quality broadcasting requires concentration of talent, and I know of no small country anywhere in the world which commands a great deal of broadcasting talent, simply because there isn't enough around in a small country. The majority of the prizes go to—and the quality goes out from—the big countries which have concentrated organizations like the BBC, and I do not see that by breaking these big organizations down into small ones you will improve the quality of the programs. I think you may improve the tone of friendliness, but you will not actually improve the quality.

As to whether television *pretends* to be a popular medium which is actually élitist, the term "élitist" is really itself a very curious one because until roughly the middle of the Sixties virtually everyone in the Western world when told he belonged to an élite was rather proud of it. And it's very interesting how it has changed so that the word is now used in a derogatory way. I

A Word about BBC Radio:

Now you ask me why did I, after 20 years in television, move into radio? *This question cannot be understood against an American background where the head of an important art department on CBS or NBC or ABC television would not exactly wish to move to radio. But imagine I were to transpose what the BBC means to American conditions—imagine the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. To have a radio network which did not have to account for the time differences inherent in continental American broadcasting, which was available to 97 percent of the entire population, which had for itself 11 orchestral organizations, as the BBC has, broadcasting virtually all the finest public concerts given in this country—so that transposed to America this would mean all the finest concerts given by the New York Philharmonic, or the Cleveland Orchestra, or the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or the Boston Symphony Orchestra, or the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra—and making all these available on a national scale. It could, in addition, commission works. It would run the biggest musical festival in the world, which is what we do in the so-called Promenade concerts in the Albert Hall in which 56 to 57 nightly concerts are given to an enormous, enthusiastic young audience, and all broadcast on the Radio Three. And you were responsible for* all *this—the biggest single musical agency in encouraging and broadcasting of music. And you were in addition responsible for drama and new drama, so that virtually every Shakespeare or new writing for drama was on your network. I think this would induce a good many people who had worked in television where they were departmental heads, as I was, to move to radio.*

And the sheer prestige of running such a network, the prestige and the respect it commands in musical and literary and current affairs circles—so that some of the talks that we transmit for the first time are actually reprinted in our own journal, which is an important journal, The Listener*—this prestige is something that one must regard with great care. At this moment, for example, we are broadcasting on the Radio Three a series on the history of the Vietnam war in which virtually every participant on the American side, with one exception, describes the reason for the American involvement and when and why the decisions were made. We obtained the contributions from people like Dean Rusk and George Ball and General Westmoreland and General Maxwell Taylor precisely because they could trust us not to misquote them, and we put out a series which in terms of the making of contemporary history does seem to me of major importance. This is something that radio* can *do, which television would simply not have the time and the space to do at the lengths at which we're doing it. One single event, the history of the Vietnam War from 1945 to the present day—and we're doing something like 11 programs—*that *would be one convincing reason for me to have undertaken this job.*

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think that there is absolutely no escape from élites, whether they're self-chosen or otherwise, because somehow or other people of ability will—unless they are deliberately kept down by some political means—get into powerful positions. And therefore it is the case that those who have the most to say—the greatest ability to say it—will find themselves near the means of mass communication in order to say so.*

That doesn't mean that everyone doesn't have the right to say what he likes, but by and large I don't think that most people will merely want to listen to other people spouting mediocrities. I don't think there is an escape from the technical means of diffusion by which even on the local level only a few people at any one time can actually operate these means of diffusion. And they will operate it in such a way that the most memorable and the most entertaining people will come to the microphone or be in front of cameras in order to be heard. Merely to have your own mediocrity reproduced will not *get* audiences. Even though the level of television is fairly low, it isn't mere ordinariness that is being depicted. It is some kind of extraordinariness. What we're saying is it is the wrong kind of extraordinariness. I mean, the number of shots fired in television films is for your and my money too much. But it is still not ordinary behavior we're showing, because if it's totally ordinary people will die of boredom.

Your next question: Can I perceive a popular art that will replace television and a medium that will be able to compete with it? Frankly, not at the moment. I once had the head of a department many years ago who, when she retired, said—and at the time we were young and very puzzled by what she said—she said, "I hope you will make television so good that people won't have to watch it any longer." Well, what we all do is try to make it so good that people watch us all the time. It ought to be possible to make television programs that are good enough to stimulate us, indeed, to switch off. That in itself would be an enormous novelty, in that American commercial television finds it almost impossible to do it because it must maximize its audiences, and therefore all professional skills are employed in trying to rivet you and never allow you even to go out to relieve yourself or to make a cup of tea. We have partly imitated this melancholy process by making trails that are often so witty and so funny and so riveting that we also don't get up out of our seats.

Nevertheless, I believe it true to say that the enemy of the good program is actually the next program. When I read a book I read it at my leisure; I use my own imagination in my own way. Because of the linearity of television and because of the very professional skills which make me look in the first place, I am then being driven to watch the next program and necessarily, if that is reasonable and good, it weakens the impact the first program had on me. And very often it may be an absolutely splendid program that I've just seen and that, indeed, the message is so important in many respects that I ought to think about it or do something about it, instead of which I go on to the next program. So that the more there is, I think, the more harmful it's likely to be. And the more there is, the mere quantity of it defeats the very quality of the individual program. So that if you have one program of quality followed by another program of quality—now I'm not even talking of rubbish, which often comes up all over the place—that in itself is likely to lessen the impact of the quality of both programs.

You ask: How do I see the communications scenario developing in the next ten years? Well, one development will be the videotelephone, and I dare say that this will have consequences—the videotelephone—also in television, because we will find ways of switching videotelephones into participation programs. And, although these will be riveting again—we'll see the people—they will further, probably, reduce the quality of programs. Because another unfashionable thing needs saying, and it is the democracy and art are very uneasy bedfellows.

One thing that will undoubtedly happen in Europe is that there will be broadcasting from satellites. And since we are in Europe divided by many languages, unlike America, satellite broadcasting could make a good deal of difference to television in that we may then, on our receivers, get programs from France and Holland and Germany and Sweden and choose these so that we could by a greater choice become more discriminating.

I think greater choice is an important concept. I believe that the multiple television programs in America have not led to greater choice because in any one city, although you may get seven or eight programs, the competition between the systems is so intense that like goes against like. As an outsider I'm always appalled at coming and switching my hotel set and finding a program on one network virtually imitated or slightly changed on another network. And when you come to Sunday morning, all the religions of the world come from your screen; Baptist, Roman Catholic—God has arrived on all channels simultaneously, and as mysteriously vanishes again as soon as one o'clock comes along. So God has His appointed place dictated by the ratings, and the place is Sunday morning, and He then, alas, disappears again. I'm not necessarily arguing the case for God in broadcasting, but I think surprise as an element hardly exists on American television, and surprise could very well be produced by satellite broadcasting in Europe, and also by the recording—and keeping the recording—of broadcasts off the air, so long as people find videotape machines sufficiently cheap to record when they want to record. The mass distribution of videotape machines could make a great deal of difference to the level of programs and also to the level of understanding of these programs. It may actually reduce the thralldom of people feeling they must sit in front of their sets because they might miss something they would hate to miss. □

It's certainly true that to move off from the élitist-specialist stance will not improve the quality of television programs . . . *but it might improve the quality of television itself, as a medium, as a factor in the social and psychological life of the country. Most importantly, the greater the number of people involved in* doing *television, the less the terrible passivity factor. I find, for example, apartment house or neighborhood television almost an ideal. Further, though amateur productions concerning ordinary lives may lack the "extraordinary" they may contribute by that very fact . . . by giving its place to the ordinary, the daily, as worthwhile (and, not incidentally, working to counter the dangerous psychological movements of the extraordinary into the life expectations of Everyperson.—K.L.*

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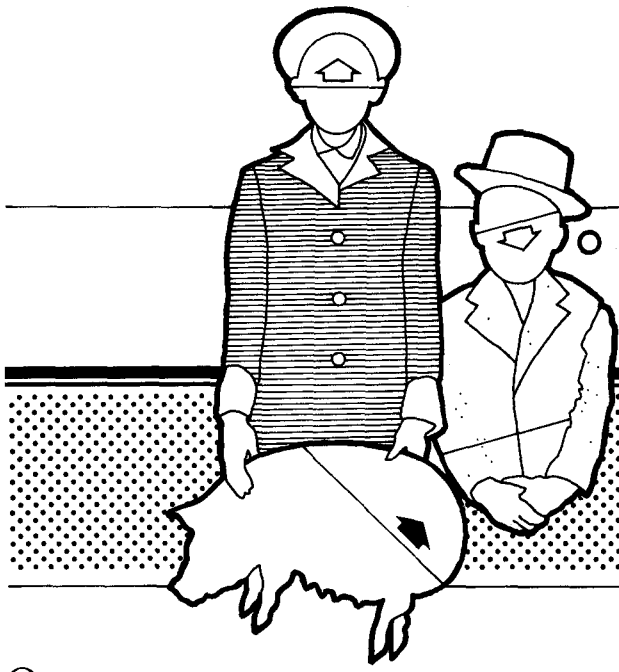

STEPHEN MINOT

ONCE UPON A TIME IT WAS 1937

Once upon a time, a long while ago, it was 1937 and the air was light. The great house stood shimmering on the ocean's edge, broad windows looking out on tiled terraces, terraces leading down in steps to lawns, lawns rolling down to the seawall, the open ocean beyond. Though no one knew for sure who owned all this, those who lived there were young and did not care. It was the only place they had ever known.

The first to rise on that particular August day — even before the dew was off the grass—was Denise. She was 15 that summer. Dressed as she usually was in her blue pinafore, her blue and gold parasol in her left hand, she walked Ariel on his leash. Together they picked their way along the granite blocks of the seawall as they did almost every morning, pausing when he was out of breath or wished to sniff at dusty miller, at ferns, at the sprigs of rosa rugosa, or at the great variety of marble gods, goddesses, and nymphs, stopping to snuffle and do his do.

Ariel was a small, almost pure white pig, the gift of Uncle Fredenberg. Most pigs do not take to leashes, but Ariel knew no other life and so had never seriously considered the alternative. For Ariel—for all of them—the great house and the lawns and the sea were world enough.

It was a wide world, spacious. Standing on that seawall and looking out one saw nothing but ocean. It continued to a distant line, blue against blue, and on crisp days when the wind was light and easterly you could make out the coast of France. Looking down the shoreline to the right, which was south, you could on those special days see ever so faintly a promontory with a speck of a tree which was a palm on the very tip of Florida. In the other direction, to the left, was Greenland, but the coast there was hidden in the perpetual mists of the Arctic seas.

Denise was not lonely. Indeed, these walks in the very early morning with Ariel on the leash were the only portion of the day she had to herself. Soon she would return to breakfast which was always at 8:00 and there would be the one they called Eldorado, two years older than she, and the three younger ones whom they had named Fido, because he was fat, and Violet and Guy. The names of the two little ones, Violet and Guy, came from a story by Edward Lear. They were all fond of Lear and Homer and could quote at length from either. They also knew most of Shakespeare, *Beowulf*, and the *Song of Roland*, all 4002 decasyllabic lines. But the best names came from Lear.

Denise and Eldorado and Fido and Violet and Guy were not brothers and sisters. But they were not unrelated either. When Denise wanted to put herself to sleep at the end of the day, she would try to review just how they were linked. Denise's mother was once married to Fido's father, but that was a long time ago; her own father lived in South America and was married to Eldorado's mother, an Argentine singer, though for some reason they never came to visit together. Originally she had thought Violet and Guy were brother and sister because they were close to the same age—seven and eight—and both spoke French; but they had different fathers, neither of whom had ever been seen. Their mother had once been married to the terrible tempered Cousin Berkeley whom they called Cousin Barks and they lived in Switzerland, but of course she couldn't stand him for long. Who could? She was presently living with Fido's father. It was a tiring game, putting them in the right boxes. And unlike the 4002 lines of *Song of Roland*, this tale was forever being updated.

The days in 1937 washed in and out like lazy rollers on the beach. Some were larger than others, but looking back it was hard to distinguish one from another. Particularly in the summer. Winters, there were tutors brought in—gray-faced young men, clever but humorless—and there were lessons to learn. But summer days darted by like so many butterflies, flickering in the sunlight, aimless. Most days. But this particular day was unique. She would recall it all perfectly while mourning in a maternity ward in 1952. But of course she did not know this on that August morning. All she knew was that Ariel had fallen on his side, quite dead.

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"Ariel," she announced at breakfast, "has had a heart attack." There was a silence.

"Perhaps he's only sleeping," Eldorado said. He was lean, angular, and that summer had a faint shadow of a mustache over his upper lip. The shadow made him look very Spanish.

"He is not breathing," she said. "And you can touch his eyeballs."

"You touched his eyeballs?" Fido said. When he opened his mouth with wonder like that, his face looked like a bulldog.

"That's how you tell whether people are dead," little Guy said. "You touch their eyeballs and see if they complain. And if they don't say a thing, you put a sovereign on them. Or any coin, I guess. Did you put coins on them?"

"I've never heard of any such thing," Denise said.

"I read about it," Guy said. They all learned a lot from Guy because although he was only eight he read more than any of them. In fact, that was about all he did. His glasses were so thick they magnified his eyes. Like a frog's. He never played with the rest of them but remained nearby, usually in the shade, reading. His mother—the one who lived in Florida somewhere just beyond that palm on the horizon—sent him two books every week. No letters. Just books. She never sent Violet anything, but that was probably because Violet had a different father. In any case, Guy was filled with information. Often he couldn't even remember where it came from. Sometimes they suspected him of making things up.

"I've never heard of any such thing," Denise said again. And then, because Nan-nan had just come in with scrambled eggs and bacon and English muffins and cambric tea all on a large silver tray, Denise put it to her: "Nan-nan, do *you* put coins on the eyes when someone dies? Does anyone?"

"Dear God," Nan-nan said, putting the tray down with a rattle of cups. "Dead? Someone's dead? Someone's washed up?" Nan-nan was old and kind and was always afraid of the sea, afraid some sailor from foreign parts would wash up. "Tell Nan-nan," she said.

"Ariel," Denise said. "Ariel just keeled over. Just like that."

"Dear God," Nan-nan said. "The poor little soul."

This startled Denise. Sadness she hadn't considered. Somehow she had thought of Ariel as more like a fish you caught in the sea and kept in a pail until it turned belly upward. But Ariel, it appeared, was to be treated like a person. She felt a wave of remorse. It washed over the others as well.

"P-p-poor Ariel," Violet said, her habitual stammer spilling over into tears. "D-d-dead."

And so it was that they decided they should give Ariel a fitting burial. Not one of them had had first-hand experience with death, so they agreed that they would have to have a family conference. Conferences were called only for the gravest of events. The last one was held the previous winter when fat little Fido refused, absolutely refused, to learn his history. His tutor had been in a bad mood and for no known reason had struck him in the face and this was Fido's way of striking back. But of course one had to learn history. Without a history, you'd be nothing. Dead. It took the weight of a family conference to convince him of that.

Conferences were awesome because they were rare and also because they were held in the living room. In fact, these were the only occasions on which they even entered that room. It was such a formal and elegant place they couldn't imagine it being used for any other purpose. The rug was deep and the chairs a fancy white with red velvet cushions, and there were portraits along the walls. There was even a statue of Minerva standing on a little pedestal. She had naked breasts.

Every article of furniture and all the portraits and even the statue of Minerva had a tag wired to it with the name of the family who claimed it. Occasionally adults appeared without notice and kissed all the children and then argued with each other about the furniture. Often they brought long-faced strangers with clipboards or briefcases. The children had been told that some day the judges would decide who owned the place and who would get each chair and table. But that seemed very unlikely.

Meanwhile, the room was reserved for the most serious of occasions.

"First, you have to have a coffin," Guy said. He startled them all with his new role as expert.

Fido snorted. He was two years older than Guy. "They don't make coffins for pigs, stupid."

"We'll have to make it," Eldorado said.

"From p-p-pine," Violet said. "It h-has to be p-p-p . . . "

"Pine," Fido said.

"P-p-p-p-pine." Violet never accepted help.

"And a stone." Denise said. They were beginning to forget that it was her pig. "A stone as a marker. With his name and all."

"How are you going to carve in stone?" Fido said.

It was Denise's theory that it was his being fat that made him so petulant.

"Paint," Denise said.

"Where are you going to get paint?"

"From my own paint set." It was the one her second stepfather had sent from France.

"Well, where are you going to get boards for the coffin? Tell me that."

"From von Ubel."

There was a hush. Von Ubel was the stablemaster. He was a surly man. The barn and the paddocks were his province. He and his wife, who was called Frau von Ubel, lived in an apartment none of them had seen upstairs in the barn. Him, they rarely saw except from a distance, repairing fences or currying one of the horses in the paddock; her, they could not avoid. As housekeeper she was forever working to keep the place spotless and complaining if they failed to line up their toothbrushes in a row. The two von Ubels carried darkness about with them.

So when Denise and Eldorado headed for the barn with the others following, single file, they were all silent. The route took them inland, back from the shimmering sea, past the rose garden and the deserted tennis courts, along the paddock fence. That was where the two youngest ones, Violet and Guy, stopped, leaning on the weathered railing, waiting. And next to the barn Fido stopped, stooping to remove a pebble from his sneaker. Denise and Eldorado went on by themselves.

They entered the barn softly, though there was no need to be quiet. How could you scare a horse? The oak door was attached to a cord and a weight so that as soon as they were inside it slowly swung shut behind them. They had to stand there for a few moments to adjust to the darkness. The barn had never been wired for electricity and depended on shafts of sunlight from the outside.

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In the murk, Denise felt immersed in heavy animal odors, overly ripe, overwhelming. She had thought it would be like the paddocks; but no, this was different. Heavier. And also the sounds—the munching, the slobbering, the thumping of enormous bodies against stable walls. These were hunters, big by any standard; Eldorado thought he could remember adults riding them, dressed to kill, milling about, raising dust, and then thundering off with hounds shrieking. He thought he could remember it, but he was not certain that it had not been a bad dream, a repeated bad dream. In any case, the horses had not been run for years. They heaved themselves against the oak walls, stomped on the floor, grunted and snorted, dreaming darkly of escape.

"Who iss that?" A voice in the darkness. From one of the stalls? "Who entered there? Speak up."

"It's us."

"Children? You children? You have no business here. It is forbidden."

They could see now the stairs which rose along the far wall, a landing and, faintly, the door to the apartment. As soon as he stepped out on this landing they saw that he had a kerosene lamp in his hand. "What iss it?"

"We want some boards. Could you give us some boards? And perhaps some nails. We have to make something. Please?"

There was a long silence. There was no telling what he might do. In this place, anything was possible. He finally did the least likely. Instead of saying a word, he came thumping down the length of the stairs, the light casting great swaying shadows across the walls and the doors to the stalls. He crossed the barn to where they stood, set his lamp down on a stool, and strode out the door into the light. They followed him, not sure whether he was going to help them or perhaps was going up to the house, to that terrible wife of his, and tell her to punish them for having set foot in his barn. They were punished rarely, but when they were it was Frau von Ubel who did it with a razor strap—his—on the backs of legs, all of this in the service yard, screened off with latticework, stinking with the garbage barrels, a place they feared almost as much as the barn.

Indeed, he may have been going up to the house. But he suddenly stopped and turned on them, bending down from his great height, his face a lean, hollow-cheeked, gunmetal gray.

"What would you want boards for?"

"To build a coffin," Denise said.

Von Ubel had never been known to smile, but he came as close as the muscles on his face would allow. That is, the cords loosened for just a moment; the frown eased.

"Ach," he said.

He took them along a path which led back of the barn. This was where they dumped the horse manure, mountains of it, and also all kinds of refuse from the barn—old plows from some distant time in history, wagon wheels, rusting pipes, broken tile. Among these were some weathered boards, gray as something washed in from the sea. Von Ubel lifted one with his booted toe.

"There," he said, not deigning to stoop for them. "That there." And he was gone.

A half hour later they had two lengths of board, one about eight feet long and the other half that length, dragged back away from the barn. Across the lawns and down to the swimming beach. They had decided that this was necessary because the boards smelled of the barn and manure and von Ubel. Before they could be made into a proper coffin they would have to be dunked in the sea and scrubbed with sand.

Actually, this was less unpleasant than they had expected. The sky was an intense blue, as blue as it often was in autumn; yet the August air was warm. The breeze was southerly, drifting up from Florida, carrying with it the scent of orange blossoms.

Most of them had changed into bathing suits—all but Denise, who rarely wore anything but her blue pinafore. She sat there regally on a throne of a rock with her parasol shading her eyes, making kindly suggestions and offering encouragement ("That looks so much better, really it does.") while the others rubbed the boards with wet sand and flat rocks, their tanned backs to the sun.

Eldorado, being the oldest, actually directed the work. He spoke softly but with great authority. He was dressed in a swimming costume Denise greatly admired. He had found it in a trunk in the attic—that same vast attic in which Denise had found her parasol. They thought his swimming suit probably belonged to Fido's father—who was tall—or to Denise's second stepfather, her favorite. But of course there was no way of knowing for sure.

What she liked about it was that it had a sleeveless top and that the pant legs, though tight, came halfway to his knees. Sometimes in the evening the five of them would steal photograph albums from the library and take them upstairs to the nursery, build a nice roaring fire to keep them warm, and study those faces, wondering who they were, claiming first this and that one as a parent. In those photographs—particularly the brown ones—there were bathing suits just like the one Eldorado stole from the attic and now wore. It was as if he had come out of the past to see her. It would seem so again in 1975 at a family reunion on a dirtier, more public beach, she sitting stiffly in an aluminum folding chair silently watching the younger ones, her children's children, sporting in the sand, she would see and be drawn almost with a startled cry to the figure of—no, not Eldorado, for he was dead—but his adolescent son and echo, a shadow of a mustache on his upper lip, who had by chance bought an almost identical suit simply because it was now considered campy, lightheartedly in style.

They scrubbed those weathered boards until they were as smooth as a gull's back and then dragged them once again up to the lawn and hid them in the rose garden which was entirely surrounded by trimmed cedars, protection from the sea winds. Denise thought she could remember adults once having tea there, seated on white, wrought iron chairs among the statues of Apollo, Cupid, and the like, but she couldn't be sure that this was a real memory. In any case, neither Nan-nan nor Frau von Ubel would have any cause to enter there and the gardener came from far away on Thursdays, and whatever day it might be this surely was not a Thursday.

It seemed to Denise that everything had really gone rather well. True, it had been awful going down there to get the boards and dealing with von Ubel. But that was behind them. It was done and they were all set. Here they were around the fire in the nursery, the boys drawing plans for the coffin in inches and feet and Violet, who had a considerable talent for art, painting on a slab of slate a wreath of lilies and ferns in the center of which was a pig's face with a single tear descending from the left eye.

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All was set except for one terrible omission. They had no tools.

"There must be tools around the house," Denise said sharply. She was angry with herself for not having pressed von Ubel, and angry at Eldorado too.

"Not even a hammer," Eldorado said. "Not here. Everything is in the barn. That's von Ubel's job too, you know. I mean, he used to be just the stablemaster, but now he's caretaker too. The tools are his. He'll never let us borrow them." There was a long silence. Then he said, "So I'll just have to take them."

Violet gasped. Denise shook her head, waiting for some magical alternative. Surely in a moment someone would say, Wait, I remember tools left in a downstairs closet. Or Uncle Fredenburg would come roaring up the gravel drive in his three-wheeled Morgan and announce that somewhere in that incredible car he just happened to have a toolbox.

But none of that happened. She was sure that it would, but it didn't.

"Just take them?" Fido said. "Steal them?"

They had moved into something new, something raw and rough-edged. It was as if they had wandered too far down the beach and the sky had turned a sulfur yellow, the sea beginning to steam.

But the next morning the sky was blue, not yellow, and the sea an eye-squinting match and song sparrows went through their trilling in much the same way they had the previous day, and Eldorado brought them all to the last of the little bathhouses and showed them the complete set of tools which he had stolen. It was almost as dazzling as it would have been if Uncle Fredenburg had showed up in his three-wheeled Morgan, a tool box under the seat.

So there in the tall beach grass, on the far side of the row of bathhouses, hidden from the house, they cut the boards into proper lengths, drilled holes with a tool shaped like an enormous egg beater, pounded nails, smoothed edges with a plane, and rubbed down the outside still further with smooth rocks and sand.

At lunch they were in great spirits. They floated above Nan-nan's request that they all go upstairs and scrub their hands and comb their hair, agreeing with exaggerated enthusiasm, Denise saying, "Oh we *are* a mess," and Fido saying, "Dis*gus*ting," and Guy, who had actually pounded nails, forgetting his books, saying, "Nan-nan, we are toilers of the field."

And after they sat down, plunging into the lovely crab cakes and avocado salad which Nan-nan spread out before them, they continued, this time talking about their plans in a kind of code partially designed to keep Nan-nan innocent but more, really, to confound Frau von Ubel who had a habit of washing the dining-room windows with evil-smelling ammonia at lunch time or dusting the portraits or treating the mahogany side tables and breakfronts with lemon oil, spying on them all the while and no doubt reporting everything they said to her glowering husband in the dark of the evening.

"Plans are set," Eldorado said to Denise with just a flip of his head in the direction of the old crone who chose that lunch hour to clean ashes out of the fireplace, shoveling them into a coal scuttle. "Tonight is the night," she said. Fido, his round face percolating with delight, said, "Perhaps instead of a burial we should have him done up as a 'diaphanous door-scraper.' "

They all giggled, all but the sour Frau von Ubel who had never read anything whatever by Edward Lear, knew nothing of the reference to his story about the children who went round the world, completing the trip on the back of a rhinoceros which they, "in token of their grateful adherence," had killed and stuffed and set up as a diaphanous doorscraper. No, Frau von Ubel would never have read such grand stuff as this and if she had she would only sniff at it, finding it incomprehensible.

"With the help," Guy said, continuing with the same story, "of the co-operative Cauliflower."

"And of *course* the Quangle-Wangle," Denise said.

Shouts of laughter. A sniff and a snort and a flurry of ash dust from Frau von Ubel.

And then something wholly unexpected happened. The swinging door to the pantry flew open, smacking the wall; there stood von Ubel himself. Black boots, gray pants, black shirt slightly stained, his gunmetal jaws churning with some terrible energy.

"Silence!" Not a sound. Even Nan-nan, slipping in behind him, dishtowel in hand, appeared as if rolling on rubber wheels. "I would not haff believed it. Not to be believed. An outrage."

"What . . . ?" from Nan-nan.

"Silence," he said to her. *To her*! So there was to be no protection. Denise found this almost beyond comprehension. She could see that it *could* be, but she could not yet believe that it *had* happened—von Ubel actually in the house itself, giving them orders, even to Nan-nan.

Von Ubel looked up and appeared to discover his wife in the room. He marched over to her, the heels of his boots cracking on the floor like whips. He stopped, click, click.

"Frau von Ubel," he said with a stiff bow. "Perhaps you are the one who stole a saw, hammer, a drill, even nails from their proper place in the barn."

"No, Herr von Ubel," she said to her husband. Not the hint of a smile on that drawn face. "My work is with brooms and mops, not with tools."

He nodded and turned on Nan-nan. On *Nan-nan*.

"And you, Fräulein. Perhaps you have taken to stealing?"

"Dear God, no," Nan-nan said, her voice almost a whisper.

"Then," he turned on the children as if he had made for the very first time an incredible discovery. "*You* are the ones. You as a group." A long silence. His eyes, dark ice, settled on each face. The grandfather clock, duly tagged by someone not there, someone living at some beach or skiing on some mountain far away, ticked. No help anywhere. "You have no right," he said slowly, "to live here as you do. No right. You will be punished. *All* of you."

Six years later, Eldorado—now shorn of the name they had given him, now anonymous in uniform, filthy and bearded,—would hear the same words, his feet aching with cold and his heart beating in great, ponderous strikes against his ribs. the speaker a Prussian officer.

And then like an apparition, von Ubel was gone. Not even the sound of his military heel. Vanished.

"Not to worry," Nan-nan said to them, but as soon as she had passed through the swinging door they could hear her mutter, "Dear God," and the sound of her fear swept aside all her assurances.

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Not until sunset could they have the burial. That was how Denise had imagined it, and Guy had read about a burial which was timed to coincide with the setting sun, and so it was decided. Besides, there was the preparation of the body. Guy had read in two different works that the next of kin had to prepare the body and this, of course, meant Denise. She would have to do it alone.

She had placed the body of Ariel in a hollow beneath a small holly in the rose garden. She had assumed that it would be safe there. She went out with a bowl of water and a face cloth to wash the body as Guy had described; but he had not prepared her for the smell. Who could have imagined that a small and harmless creature like Ariel could contain such a terrible odor? It was the first such realization, but it would not be the last. Later, in the blue uniform of a wartime nurse, she would have private thoughts as she labored on the dying and on those already dead. How could she explain to anyone that the overwhelming odor of gangrene or rotting flesh would fill her with a quiet lament for a pig?

She washed the body, wiping from its eyes the cluster of ants who would not wait. And then she wrapped Ariel in white toweling which she had stolen from the linen closet in the great house. Strange, she thought, that while they had all been given so much to play with, they had to steal the really important things like tools and shrouds.

At sunset they all met in the rose garden. It was agreed that as soon as it was over it would be dark enough for Eldorado to enter the barn once again and try to return the tools. There was no way of telling whether this would appease the wrath of von Ubel since they had never dealt with such a man before, but surely it could do no harm.

Tense with uncertainty, they did their best to concentrate on what they knew had to be done. They dug in silence, the light fading. Then they placed the coffin in the hole. The smell was better now—more like a grape vinegar, thanks to a bottle of 1932 Beaujolais which Denise had found in the wine cellar and emptied on the burial shroud.

Then each of them said a few words over the grave. Denise said goodby and apologized for keeping him on a leash so much. Eldorado said that they would always remember him as long as they lived—a prediction which turned out to be correct. Fido said that he had loved Ariel, which was not entirely true since there had been times when he had called the pig such names as dumdum, dimwit, and weewee, and had teased Denise on occasion by asking how much bacon they could get from him. But this was no time for unvarnished truth.

Guy, always the reader, recited from an old hymnal he had found in the attic. The lyrics began with "Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh," and it started Violet sniffling. When it came to her turn, she completely forgot whatever she had planned to say and all that came out—with greater difficulty than usual—was what they all knew: "H-he's d-d-d-d . . . d-dead." For once, Fido did not say it for her.

In the darkness they put the dirt back and set up the painted headstone. Eldorado had just replaced the turf and was packing it down when the night exploded.

Someone had hold of Fido, shaking him. Shouts. A torrent of guttural curses. Kicking. And then it was Guy—held by some dark woman, struck with a crop, shouted at. Denise caught a quick glimpse of Eldorado racing down the garden path—deserting her? Abandoning them all? She threw herself at the woman, beating her with clenched fists, and somehow she herself was being held. Fire across her thighs.

"The boy!" someone was shouting. "Where is he? He's not here."

"He'll put them back." Fido's voice. "He'll put them back."

"Shut up," Denise said, but it was too late.

"Quick," von Ubel said to his wife and the two of them lumbered off toward the barn. In Denise, a new jolt—Eldorado was trying to get the tools back. She could see that now. And they were to stall the von Ubels. But they hadn't. Not long enough. The von Ubels would catch him, beat him. She saw now that they were mad. There were no limits. Unchecked, they could kill.

She ran for the barn, tearing her clothes on the rose bushes and dropping her parasol which she would find later, trampled beyond repair. She ran and the others ran behind her.

When they reached the barn there was already a fight going on. They could hear shouts. She threw herself against the door but someone had locked it. Shouts from inside. Thumping, pounding. The crack of a whip. A *whip*? Eldorado's shout. A cry of pain. His? He was in there. He was surely in there with those two mad creatures, with the horses—beyond imagination.

She turned to Fido and in a rush told him to run to the house, to call the operator in town, to tell her to send the police, the firemen, anyone; to send everyone. Now. At once. And she saw him run as she had never seen him run, saw his form in the darkness become something new, unfamiliar, gone from her.

From inside the sounds of thumping, shouting; a crash and an explosion of glass. A lamp? The little windows were too high; she pressed her face to the crack in the door but it was too narrow. Suddenly the slit came alive, flowing red as if a sun were rising inside. Lamp light? The shouting increased and then was drowned by the scream of a horse—unimaginable terror.

"Fire!" someone beside her shouted. Yes, the windows up there were glowing now. She called out to Eldorado, shouting as she never had in her life and the sound was lost. She ran to the side of the barn, pounding; to the back. Sounds came from inside she could not believe—horses and men.

From a small door above her, an opening from which they dumped manure, a form fell. She was over him in an instant, the two of them in the terrible stench, the roar of fire eating their words. He stood. He was alive! She was shouting "Eldorado, Eldorado," the sound of her voice lost in the fire.

Other men were present now, many forms. Lights flashed. Sirens. The two of them were dragged back away from the building. Trucks, hoses, loudspeakers.

Denise and Eldorado stared at the flames pouring from the windows, breaking through the roof; where the glass had been smashed, they could see inside, see the rage of it, timbers falling in explosions of red. The sounds were new and harsh—men shouting, sirens, the roar of fire consuming, the horses screaming.

The two of them stood there, holding hands, gathering strength they did not know they had; and they thought, each in different words, "This is what it will be like. This is what we will have to survive out there." □

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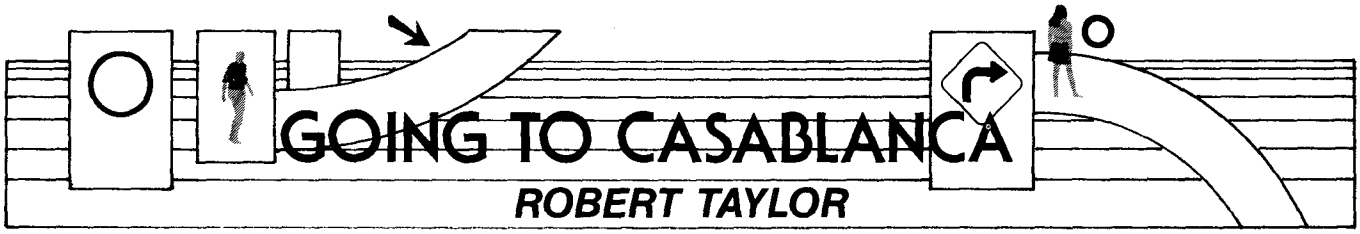

GOING TO CASABLANCA

ROBERT TAYLOR

Cozy in the narrow bed, she remembers how it was: the small boy, once herself, sad in the knowledge of his wronging flesh, closeting himself daily and kneeling at the hems of long gowns that he believed were the emblems of angels. There was the strong urge to tell someone—but who could he have told of such desire? Not his mother, her black hair stiffened by chemicals into curls and ringlets, nor his father, with such strong arms and always with the hard smell of cattle. And certainly not his sister, transfixed as she so often was in front of her many-roomed dollhouse.

No one then. So it had to be a secret kept well-hidden until finally he took the angels' dare and one day was lifted gently from within himself into a bright red room in which the colors possessed the capacity to touch and stroke and the silence had a scent to it, like his mother's perfume, fresh and close. There was no getting out, no wanting to get out, flowers all around, absurd penis now a stem thornless and thin and ablossom with soft petals in a garden of lilacs and orchids. Where is little Clementine, his mother had asked, finding him through soap bubbles and warm water: *here she is! Mommy had a wee penis like this one—a long time ago. Yes, and she kept it very clean and pink*. No need then to tell. Pure in his new self, he had lost all desire. Not even death was secret.

*

Casablanca! Tussaud said. Why Casablanca? Ain't there places closer do the job just as well?

Philip explains patiently. It is primarily a matter of avoiding red tape. Also the length of the journey is itself important. He must go far, so much to accomplish. And the place, frankly, should be exotic. Yes, there is much to be said for Casablanca, and he is not by any means the first to go there. The clinic enjoys an excellent reputation.

*

On those days in Oklahoma when the heat is close and the clouds form a black squall line on the horizon, he watches for the funnel to appear and move towards him. His father and uncles, cattle ranchers with skin dry as the red soil, joke about the twisters. Just a little Sooner breeze, boy! You know what one of them funnels really is, don't you? You don't? Well, come here close and I'll whisper it to you. *It's God's ding-dong!* His dick, don't you know. *God's pisser, son!*

He remembers a time when Tussaud had expressed great sorrow. Philip, he said, a great and rare spirit has passed from this earth. Silver Saltanstall is dead. Father Silver is no more among us on the face of this earth. He who more than anyone, more even than you, fight the fight to make the outer resemble the inner, that great sad man, he is no more.

He remembers Tussaud's large eyes, how they glisten in the dim light of the small Marina apartment, and the resonance of the minister's voice, so powerful under the spell of that melancholy. Silver Saltanstall dead!

*

She considers the pain worth it. Wrapped in white hospital robes she walks the corridors of the clinic. The pain is a dull aching in the loins that sometimes ebbs into sharpness, as though the knife were still doing its work, as though the body has a vivid memory of that work and in this way conveys the memory of it to her so that she might know the mischief it endured while she slept. But it is not mischief. She will not think of it as mischief, and the pain will be gratefully endured. What will not pass away so easily is her fear of shame. If she returns to Oklahoma, she will be whispered about, perhaps ridiculed. She avoids thinking of such a return. Instead, she imagines going back to San Francisco and living a normal life, calm in her new-found sense of self, happy to be alive.

*

He misses Tussaud, thinks of Tussaud as he walks the streets of Casablanca, Tussaud rejecting the past and taking a new name upon arriving from Oklahoma in his blessed city of Saint Francis. Willie Jones, Tussaud had declared, died somewhere in the Mojave Desert. This is Ferlin Tussaud, alive in the here-and-now: Poet of The Word!

Tussaud would take to this heat, would strike mean bargains with these fierce Arabs, intimidate by virtue of his booming black preacher's voice and his flashing white teeth. The past no consideration—only this moment, the present transparency of the air and weight of the heat—Tussaud would be his escort along the crowded narrow streets and in the smoke-filled clubs at night. Tussaud would make him feel real, as though he were the tangible creation of some excellent sculptor, a work of art.

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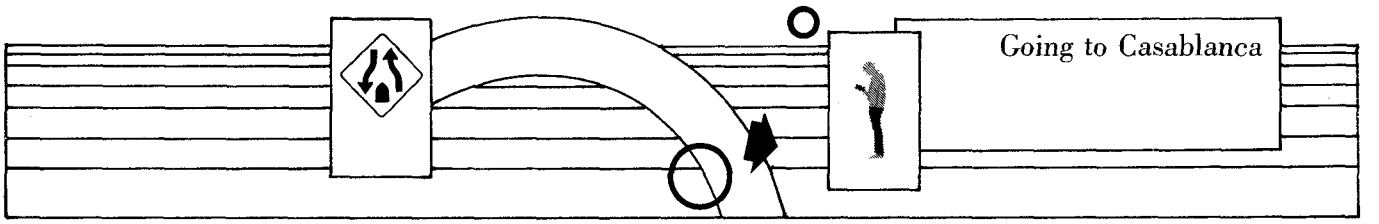

She writes of his father's suicide: I was at home from college, being his son, convinced that I really belonged in that other institution in Norman, the one where the craziness was not covert. My first year had been mediocre enough to be considered a success. No suspiciously high marks, no unusually low ones. Initiated into a respectably racist fraternity, I had considered suicide an attractive way out of a spiteful body, but kept my considering to myself. Carolyn, I remember, came to my room, where I kept myself closed off from the constant arguing that always went on when we were reunited on holidays. She seemed to me more angry than distressed. Philip, she said, you'd better come in here. I rose immediately from my bed, closing the Dostoevsky I'd been reading (*The Idiot?*) without marking my place, following her to the kitchen. He stood with his back to my mother's spotless sink, hands behind him, staring so hard at my mother that he did not see me at first. Now, he said, now you've all got what you wanted. Now you can go about your lives in peace. I will bother you no more! He must have known, of course, that in going in such a way he made sure we would indeed be bothered by him for the rest of our lives. Suicide "victims" possess just such omnipotence, I am certain. They are the ones who are most certain of eternal life, they the furies that buzz in the heads of the defeated, the living, and therefore need no memorial other than a few survivors—one will do— in whose minds they may find an eternal resting place.

*

Mother's little Clementine, lost and gone forever! Soon, anyway. Then the softness which already he can feel, wanting it so intensely in these moments that he seems to leave his body and hover above himself, kept afloat in the air by the pressure of his desire. He must compose himself. In this phase, these last hours, he must compose himself, cultivate calmness of spirit by staying with this body that he had been born with, that he has borne these thirty-one years. For through it had he not sensed pleasure as well as pain, learned his way in a world full of deception and trickery?

His touch is cold, the tips of his fingers hard, rough, yet capable for all that of arousing, bringing little Clementine to the edge of passion, teasing with soft slow strokes the way his mother used to touch in the soapy water, her hands smooth and slippery. Look at how Clementine is growing—so fat and tall! No. She would never have said that. Not his mother.

No. Ah, well. There it is. Coming soon now: *Clementine!* There. *There*.

Then the surly detumescence and so soon the permanence of dream.

Suicide, Tussaud said, must be avoided at all cost. This after Philip's third attempt. How could Philip explain to Tussaud this feeling that he'd had ever since he could remember, the feeling that his body was wrong, that there had been a foul-up, genes crossed, chromosomes inverted or new ones invented, something. And that he simply could not tolerate this condition any longer. Could Tussaud understand that?

He said he could. Yes, indeed. It is the condition, he said, of us all. You only speaking—using your own terms, of course—of the age-old tension between the spirit and the flesh. Yes. You talking of bodies and souls. It is a theological question, therefore, and I understand your dilemma because I share it. My soul is good, but my deeds, well, they not always so good. Good and evil, black and white, female and male, god and human, light and dark—these the classic *dye-kottomees*. You resolve them, my good friend, why then you gone be some kind of saint. You gone fly right up to heaven and flit about on the laps of the angels on high. God gone give you a big welcome, my friend. He gone say *Congratulations!*

*

Wheeled into a white-walled room, losing his sense of being, his consciousness passing away like a great gray train before which his real self stands waiting in order to cross into another neighborhood, Philip thinks: Silver Saltanstall is dead!

Did you know, his mother said, that I was once a little boy like you. Yes, I was. I climbed trees and used to like to sit up in high branches just the way you do. My daddy called me Bobby. Mother never knew. It was a secret between Daddy and me. I was his little boy Bobby.

*

Will they really be there to meet her? They had promised, but still she has her doubts. On the plane she relishes the subtle differences, the way the men in their dapper suits glance at her over their little attache cases, making her think that after all a man might not be so impossible. Perhaps if the right one came along . . . Ah—there they are, Mother in a checked pants suit, Carolyn in a white loose-fitting dress, both of them waving from the observation area. Wearing white gloves! No, surely not. Not white gloves in the seventies. It is just the palms of their hands, perhaps illuminated unnaturally by the glaring sun. But do they really recognize her, accept her? If only her father were alive! Oh, but that was absurd. He would never accept her. She would have only curses from him. The bastard! The coward! They would exchange curses, fling abuse as though it were solid enough to do real damage.

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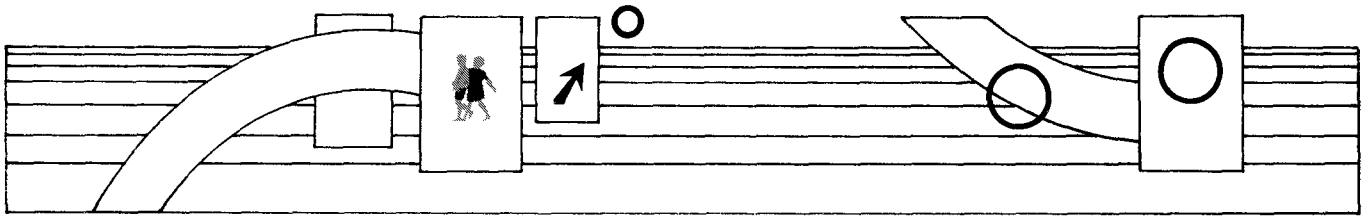

Self a confusion, an explosion of senses: visions of great white flowers, the soft petals caressing, floral scents, the feel of one's own soft skin, sound of footsteps, high-heels on concrete. Knowing nothing, no certainty, least of all a sureness of sex, the dangling member strange as something created by a dadaist to shock or to arouse disgust. Then a sleep in which the same images are magnified ten-fold, and the doctor, brown-red stains in no discernible pattern across the front of his white smock, paces in long heavy strides, the white mask tied so tight that the nose seems smashed flat by it and the lips appear merely white-skinned, not covered at all, two white finger-like petals.

*

He reflects on "the growing phenomenon of sex-change operations": it is a sign, surely, of man's (I use the term loosely) coming of age. Nature can no longer impose a tyranny on us. The man who chooses to become a woman and the woman who chooses to become a man choose freedom in a sense that our forebears could not have imagined. Here is free will at last! The only comparable act is suicide. But, unlike suicide, the sex-change is a creative act, an affirmation of life rather than a rejection of it, an affirming, in the way of all art worthy of the name, of the transcendental in humankind and hence of that which is eternal—call it *spirit*—as opposed to that which is perishable. This is no contradiction. Give a surgeon in Casablanca or Copenhagen or Baltimore or Tijuana leave to alter fundamentally the shape of your body and you affirm the power of the mind over the body. Controversy arises only if we must quibble over terminology, whether the word *mind*, for example, is too easily associated with the word *spirit*, or whether the imposing of *will* has anything to do with the glorification of the *soul*.

*

Tussaud must have believed that Silver Saltanstall, in a green ill-fitting dress and black-patent high heels fashionable two decades ago, had special powers that might be useful in "healing" Philip. He brought the older man regularly to Philip's apartment—this when he lived on Union Street above the Buddha Shoppe—sat him down with great ceremony in the St. Vincent De Paul easy chair, old Silver ponderous in his silence, and each time said: Now. We gone sit here and talk with Brother Philip for a little while.

But Silver never had anything to say, only sat and sipped from the tall heavily-iced gin and tonic that Philip always knew to provide him, sipped and occasionally looked to one side and then to the other without ever moving his head, the eyeballs moving very quickly from one corner of the thickly mascaraed eye socket to the other. This behavior suggested to Philip that the old man had achieved great exterior calm while maintaining much interior motion.

Tussaud made up fables and parables illustrating the uses of lust in the quest for redemption, and Silver spoke only when ready to go. Then he said: It is time to go. And Tussaud, who invariably stood the entire time as though practicing the delivery of sermons, immediately fetched Silver's ragged raccoon-collar coat while Philip helped Silver rise from the easy chair. We would stay later, Tussaud tells Philip at the door, but we got other calls to make.

*

Philip follows his father across the red dirt field to the feed lots. His father's boots are black and shiny, reddened slightly by the dust, with pointed toes squared at the tips and thick high heels. The khaki trousers are not tucked into the boots, are held up by a thick belt embossed with a design that looks like swirling dust. At the feed lot his father is handed the cattle prod by the big man who is foreman. Standing above the cattle on the fence-rails, he waves this prod before him as gracefully as though it were merely an extension of his arm. The other men, his employees, seem intent on imitating him. They shout: Ho, there! Hey! Move! The pace of the cattle remains slow. It is hot, the dust is thick, the flies fierce and huge, blacker than any house fly and far sleeker.

*

You know what always get to me (Tussaud told him), is the way they talk about pride. Be proud you an Okie. Yes. That's what they always saying. On the T. V. and in the *Daily Oklahoman*, everywhere you turn around they's somebody standing there telling you be proud you an Okie! And then these same folks, they claim they good Christians. Yes! Tell me now. You ever hear about Jesus going around and telling folks they got to be proud of theirselves? Did He say to the rich man, be proud of all your fortune? Did He preach that the proud ones, they gone inherit the earth? No, my friend. You ever see one of your cowboys turn the other cheek? Sheet. Not unless it's the cheek of their ass! Let a damn brahma bull bust their balls all to little pieces, but they gone be *proud* of it afterwards. Yes! I tell you what, friend, I am *proud* to be out of that state.

*

One night Silver Saltanstall came to Philip's apartment, drunk, in "disguise" (as he referred to himself when he wore women's clothing), disoriented in a way that seemed to Philip to surpass any confusion that alcohol could cause. What is that noise, he asked. There *was* a noise, a steady tapping sound from above. An elderly gentleman in the apartment over Philip's used this method to demonstrate his presence. Philip had once called the man to complain, but was put off by the man's kindness, and by his patient insistence that he never made any noise at all, using his cane only for walking. Philip had grown used to the sound.

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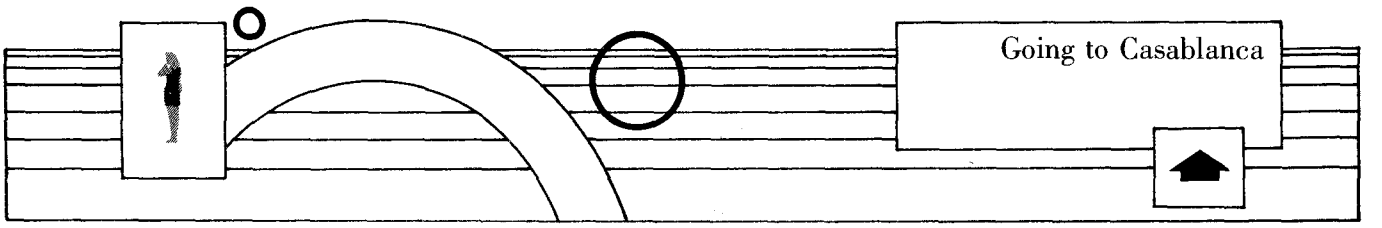

Saltanstall, his great rouged head tilted to one side, listened intently, as if trying to discover the key to some code in the pattern of tapping. Then he turned abruptly to Philip and claimed already to be dead. He had died, he explained, about a year before leaving Oklahoma City. Perhaps a rebirth was in the offing, but it had not as yet occurred. At least not to his knowledge. And you would think (he smiled) I would be the first to know.

After saying this, he left immediately. But he climbed up the stairs instead of going down.

*

Carolyn's dollhouse never changes, always the little chairs the exact same distance from their matching tables, the pink-faced family preparing to eat the same plump turkey. One day when she is being taken to the doctor by her mother and Philip is alone in the house, he goes to the dollhouse and rearranges everything, moving the family to their respective bedrooms, everywhere placing pieces of furniture in other rooms, the beige refrigerator in the living room, the blue plastic sofa in the kitchen. The turkey goes in the fireplace. It is better, but still no good. He sees, however, what the problem is. It is the family itself. He must take them out of the house. He places them in the bottom of her waste basket, and then returns to his room.

But the next time he looks in the house it is restored to its original condition, all furniture back in place and the family, with one exception, back at their station around the dining room table. The one exception is the daughter, who now stands in her own room upstairs, facing the window.

Carolyn never says a word to him about the incident. He regrets what he has done, finds his behavior petty and spiteful, but does not apologize. However, he keeps himself from looking into the dollhouse again.

*

His mother is a winged creature, not angelic but with certain suprahuman powers deriving from her physical advantage. He imagines her thus, him the small boy locked into the body he does not want to inhabit. He sees her going to the beauty shop, where her power no doubt was replenished, while he sits on the hard bleachers in the hot sun, instructed by his father to watch his cousins, smug in their pin-striped uniforms and cleated black shoes, catch impossible line drives and bat in winning runs. In her presence, men smile sheepishly. Everywhere she goes, doors open for her, and he feels some of that power when he is with her, as though it might be rubbing off on him.

Following his father through the vast feed lots, he sees that the world is harsh and ugly. His father resembles the cattle he watches over, big, bovine, leanest and strongest just before death. Flies seem to swarm around his father, leaving the shining haunches of cattle in order to walk about on his hard flat cheeks and stroll on his great square jaw.

His sister sees things differently. One day she runs into Philip's room, tears in her eyes, and says, "I hate that woman. I would like to kill her!" Don't say that, he tells her. Don't you ever say that again. But she does. She falls to his bed, sobbing, cursing her mother. Daddy! she shouts. Why isn't Daddy here? Why is Daddy always in Oklahoma City when you need him the most? Daddy understands me. He knows what I have to go through with that woman!

*

He winds his way through the narrow sultry streets until at last coming to a modest building, made of stucco like the others but with a tinted glass door such as are found on banks and drugstores in the United States. The receptionist, a tall, pale woman with tightly curled white hair, accepts currency from him and then leads him into a small waiting room, where on a vinyl couch he thumbs through dog-eared copies of *Newsweek*. He thinks: it is like a doctor's waiting room in Oklahoma. When I write my memoirs I will try to remember this impression, the feel of the cold vinyl, the smooth off-white plaster walls, the thick dark green carpet, and this anticipation of a genial elderly doctor with a soft Oklahoma drawl and smooth white hands.

*

The body, says Tussaud, it is not to be reconciled to its spiritual likeness. This the cardinal fact regarding the human condition. Have remorse, he tells Philip, that is all to be done. The greatest sin is to believe yourself beyond damnation. To be saved is to perceive the essential uncleanness of the knowable soul. After such salvation you gone rest in the vasty present, blessed with that peace of mind which surpasseth (oh, yes, it *do!*) understanding. □

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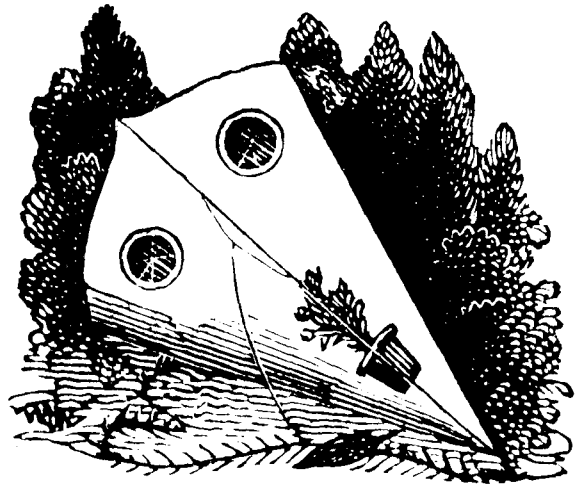
LET US KNOW

A STORY BY DIANE VREULS



My son bought a kite, a Waybe Highspy, the kind the wrapper says sailed up six miles over Utah and collided with a jet. He went out with his grandfather Thursday. They took ten rolls of twine and a Number 200 Highspy Twine Winder, with the cord tied to the grommet in the keel. We bring them sandwiches in relays, and bolsters to prop them on the field. Every few hours they add on a ball of twine and pay it out slow through the winder. The kite's got too high to see. If you cross our quadrant and meet it, let them know.

I knew a man named Larvey who made wooden nickels. Made them twice lifesize, of pine. He liked carving the buffalo, though the reason he gave was different: had to do with a Mr. Felix Schlag and his face of Thomas Jefferson reading In God We Trust. Schlag's design had won a contest to replace the old five-center. Just a matter of time, said Larvey, and the buffalo would be gone, gone from our pockets, purses, piggybanks, gone from the linings of jackets, the cuffs of old trousers, gone, and taking the Indian with it. "Schlag," he said, "Schlag!" and sat carving; each coin took more than six weeks. Well, that was back on Ninth Street, back when they made them of nickel. But nickel growing scarce, they changed to copper, copper growing thin they tried lead. Then zinc, aluminum, chromium, plastic, tin. Now it says in the paper they're thinking of going to wood. Let him know.

Eino Eskola was drafted in 1942 and sent to one of the few remaining troops of the cavalry. He hated horses. A simple farmboy from Wakefield, he deserted. Rode the train up to Ironwood, took the bus towards home, then hid in the woods near Wico. He made his way to Anvil Location and camped in the company buildings near the old mine. In summer he bathed in the pits, in winter shot deer and rabbits. Once we found a sauna built of birches. Once a clothesline strung in a clearing and, nearby, a small plot of greens. A few years ago we approached him to tell him he was safe: the statute of limitations had finally expired. But he ran from us, as he always did, this time towards the border. We were frightened of the forest and didn't follow. If you go North, let him know.

Rula went to her eighth grade reunion. It was high school class of '50, but the things they recalled happened sooner and the men looked less than eighteen. "I love those people," she said to me later, "I loved walking into that room of children who appear row by row in my dreams." She interviewed them intensely. They answered, releasing secrets kept under wraps for twenty years. She liked best talking to those who started so poorly but had come mid-age into their own. But the thing she wasn't prepared for was the way they questioned her back. Hadn't she really got famous? What of their plans for her? Oh no, she reassured them, she was married with four nice children and spent her days weeding the farm.

"I thought they'd be pleased we'd grown closer. I thought now they'll finally forgive me for winning all the awards."

But they were troubled. "Surely there's more?"

"Oh no," she said, "I'm quite happy." She never once mentioned her work.

Her work. "Do you think I should have told them, they seemed to believe in me so?"

Yes, I think she could have told them. If you see them, let them know.

Because our name is a town in their country, the two Dutch exchange research chemists called for my sister each morning to skate across the lake. They were insistent and prompt; as a compatriot she had to go.

Wisconsin is cold at five in the morning and that winter was very long. Lake Mendota froze in November and still supported cars in late March. They had to dodge those cars, driven mid-lake by fishermen who huddled over ice holes and were startled by their flashlights when they skated past before dawn.

She never made it across. They started flanked, then my sister dropped from the center and half-way was two blocks behind, lingered at fishing holes, tried to warm up at the stoves, talk to the men in grunted exchanges that broke their attention on their lines. By December she headed straight for the cars and asked to wait inside, where she dozed with her blades braced on dashboards or, breathing a hole in the window frost, watched for the Dutchmen's return. She could just make them out: two black figures in flapping coats, bent

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DIANE VREULS has published a novel, Are We There Yet? *(Simon & Schuster), and teaches writing at Oberlin.*

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like grackles, growing larger against the far shore. They'd collect her and see her home and say she'd do better next day.

One morning she stopped. It was after a night of study, she had an exam, a cold, swollen ankles, and didn't answer the bell. Their knocking roused the housemother, who pulled her by her robe to the door. She couldn't face them, only yelled through the mailslot, I CAN'T, I FORGOT TO TELL YOU: I'M HALF SERB. They skated alone till thaw. Soon after, they went back home.

Aging, she wakes early. It's just as cold. Stops only for coffee. Laces up, heads across the lake. She makes it in twenty minutes, less when the wind shifts. She'd like them to know.

But that's not the point; it's the examples. You saw that at once; I didn't, was thinking instead of what happened to Meg.

Meg wouldn't go with me. She was supposed to meet Mark in the Highlands but bogged in the moors. Her boots cracked, her pack split, bus drivers passed in the rain. She made it to Whitby in high season, took hours to find a hotel. Residential, you paid by the week. She moved in to dry.

She wove the scaling rope window to doorknob and hung up her clothes. Dressed only in felt bootliners and her rag of a raincoat, she stumbled out to the abbey, down for food. There was no one to talk to. The English read paperbacks in wet deckchairs or crowded the upstairs tearooms, ordering sweets. They wore tweeds they had purchased in pink the previous Easter and draped macs on every free chair. She tried to phone Mark. His landlady answered and said he had gone to France. Or was it an operation? This was a long time ago.

On the fourth day she grew melancholy. That evening in two pairs of sweatsocks she struck out towards the High. The cinema was sold out, the newsstands and pharmacies closed. Back in her room between washlines, she grew desperate and did it: fell back on her Inner Resources, the ones she'd been saving for years. Saving for the plane crash, the floating month on the raft, for the eighteen-hour surgery when the laughing gas tank ran dry. Poetry learned in the seventh grade. Commercials, songs from Kukla, Fran and Ollie. The periodic table, the Succession of Norman Kings. Fifteen minutes, she ran out. A measly fifteen minutes. After seventeen years of schooling, she needed something to read.

She read the famed door portrait, the one with the list of rules. The Managers are not Responsible. "Naturally. No one's responsible: not Mark," she said, "least of all me. I have never believed in the Highlands, the low road is faster every time." That's what the song says. She sang it. Her accent was bogus, she sneezed on each refrain. She read the doily on the dresser, looped almost into script. Squint, you can catch the moral. She looked for a Bible instead.

The lampstand, however, seemed empty, the cardboard wardrobe bare. Someone had left a box of prophylactics behind the seashell figurines. She did drawers. Attacking the highboy, she found her hopes answered in print. A magazine was unstapled, its pages spread to keep underwear from snagging, to cover old stains. They lined the drawers in consecutive order, starting with the Contributors' Notes. She worked her way through Letters, Bovril ads and four sides of the Queen. In the third drawer she found it: a story called "Wings." He is in the RAF. She's the wife who waits. It's the early 1940s, but the agony endures. He is off on dangerous missions, but the sacrifice is hers. Drawer four seems sympathetic to the woman's side of the case, but pull out the bottom one, she's gone bad—spoiled, unpatriotic, undermining esprit de corps. The story continued in the lampstand and on to the wardrobe shelf, where she seems to be mulling divorce, or at least an affair with someone named Ned. Then nothing. The room ran out of drawers.

It was eleven o'clock on a week night. Still, there were noises through the wall. A radio, sounds of furniture being bumped. She went into the hall and listened, rapped at the next door down.

The woman who answered was drunk and understanding, after the third repeat of the plot. Hastily unpacked her bureau, down to the Whitby *Mail*. The lampstand was lined with blotters, the desk drawer newly shellacked. But there on the shelves of the wardrobe underneath her pairs of shoes they discovered the continuation, intact. They read it aloud. After several close calls, the wife remained faithful and welcomed her husband on leave. She told them they were pregnant, at which the drunk lady weeps. In the cabinet under the window lurked the penultimate scene: he must face a deadly airlift, it is certain he won't return. They checked the umbrella stand, the mattress, the wall patches under the sink. They raced to the hall, no drawers, none in the W.C. The man in the next room was sleeping; the room next to his was locked. They returned to the lady's quarters and sweeping stacks of clothes off the bedspread, sat down and had a long drink. There were two ways it could end, only two. They reread the shelves from the beginning but couldn't tell which it would be.

Look for thin wartime paper. Ask for room 305. Whitby. The Sea Shingle, on Warder Street.

Finally, this.

We counted on lasting the century and promised to meet. At the Water Tower, north side, at midnight. Or was it the clock at Marshall Field's? No, that was V-J Day. It was the Water Tower. Or else a lion in front of the Art Institute. The north lion? No, we would have said *left*, the left one. You distinctly said north. And I remember talking of cows, or kicking the bucket. I'm not sure now.

You were wearing—what were you wearing? Sometimes I see a necktie—or is it a scarf?—with yellow roosters. It startles me. Is that because it's unlike you? Sometimes the roosters are tiny boats. Either way, it's a clue. A person who keeps appointments. Resolute. I see us raising glasses of warm champagne, but that was back in the fifties and must have been papercup wine. "To Two Thousand," was that the toast? It doesn't ring any bells. Paper bells. Hats and streamers. Was it that kind of New Year's Eve?

Only once I heard bells on New Year's. I was living in Zurich with people who went to bed. Babies. My husband. They went to bed early, no matter what. It mattered to me, to wait until twelve, knowing all the while it was false, a local celebration in the wrong time zone for me. I wound open the window on Klosbachstrasse, leaned out and heard the bells. It was snowing, and bells. I watched it snow. Before my New Year's came, I fell asleep.

Will it be snowing on Michigan Avenue? Snow on the clocks, the old Water Tower in the year two thousand A.D.? Whoever you are, will you wait? □

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MATRICIDE

A STORY BY KAREN SNOW

Hey! Don't kill your mother!" The message hummed Mother's Day through the telephone wires from San Francisco to Boston.

"I won't, Samn," I laughed. "Don't you kill yours."

That was yesterday. But thirty years ago, it was no laughing matter:

It's a May day in a midwestern high school. In the girls' locker room, some of us tenth graders have just read the big black headlines of the morning newspaper, and a few of us have scanned the report: Two girls, both sixteen, hacked their mothers to pieces with an ax and buried the chunks under the floor boards.

"Yuk!" a girl gags.

"Their own mothers? Sick!"

"On *Mother's* Day? I don't believe it!"

"Sick! Sick! *Sick!*"

Samn (really Margaret Samnelson) and I exchange a glance. Our hackles rise, or is it gorge? or both?

Our classmates scamper out to the softball field to rehearse a Maypole dance for the forthcoming festival. Samn and I remain sealed to the bench, linked by that inky black headline between us.

"Put it our of your mind," she growls.

"I can't," I whisper, and feeling faint, I bend down to re-tie my tennis shoes. Then, feebly, I stand.

Samn stands, too. She grabs me, and I let myself stay grabbed, let my weak body merge with her strong body into a pole-like stiffness, while our merged heads fulminate *murder! . . . murder!* MURDER whirling around us, tangibly, like the streamers from a Maypole. After a while, the vertigo passes.

HEY! DON'T KILL YOUR MOTHER. For years that refrain was our talisman.

Who were we? We were troubled girls who struck poses.

Samn's pose: The Tomboy: sailor-swagger, leather jacket, short-short hair, slit-eyed scowl. Sometimes she spat a gruff expletive out of the side of her heavy jaw.

My pose: The Pristine Blonde: A slight girl, with ivory hair shawling the top half of my body, I'd stand at the classroom window, wistful, sighing. The pose scared off the handsome history teacher for whom it was rigged; also the boys, which I may have intended. But like flypaper, it often drew the roving hungry eyes of Margaret Samnelson.

One April day, a few weeks before the locker room episode, she strode over to the window and stood beside me. "Jeez! I hate my mother!" she confided, and smacking her fist into her palm, she spoke in spurts of the whiskey-voiced, twice-divorced toot who sold real estate and slept in vacated houses with clients, and swindled lots of people, and drove a red Cadillac.

I glanced up at this ruffian: so burly, so non-studious, so scornful of grades; and within my tight throat, I felt a small voice struggle:—*My round-shouldered mom's always scrubbing the floor on her hands and knees, like a turtle, and she snaps like a turtle, too*. But all that rose to my lips was a faint "Me too."

"You, too!" Samn whoofed, and she bounced her fists on the windowsill.

My heart galumphing with borrowed bravado, my throat encored:—*More like a hawk, really: nose like a beak, big mean yellow eyes*—But all that rose to my lips was "Uh huh."

DON'T KILL YOUR MOTHER. We needed that commandment more than we needed the Sunday School Ten.

The scene shifts to a little bungalow between the papermill and the railroad track. It is two months later: June. In the living room, on the couch, I'm doing my homework. Hunched over her basket of mending, Hawk is lecturing me. "If there's one thing I hate—" which is the way she begins most of her sentences, "—it's a person that goes in a bedroom n shuts the door."

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Masturbation warning? Right, by half. The other half is: She wants—*needs*—an audience.

"My nerves r bad today. Yer dad, what does he care fer *me?* Upholds *you* somethin awful—" She claws around in the basket and snatches a fluffy yellow ankle sock (a gift from Samn, who last Christmas distributed a whole boxful of them to the gym class: *I'm rich. Won't someone be my friend?*) "This musta cost a mint . . . There was this roustabout . . . n I was such a greenhorn . . . He took me to the boxcar, said he wanted ta show me sumpin . . . Why! I shoulda throwed kerosene in his eyes . . . Then there was this other guy—" The horrors swarm out of her mouth like a virus. "I tell you these things for yer own good, Whitey, so's you won't make my mistakes."

Without glancing up from my books, I *mmmmmm* at the right places.

"Why, lookit this sock!" she commands. "Feel that. Gee, I never had anything purty when I was a girl. *My* ma never darned *my* socks. When *I* was yer age, I was workin in the mill." Her big needle pecks at the heel. "You got it soft, Cream Puff, haven't ya, huh?"

"Mmmmmm." Gravely I sit there, dictionary in lap, trying to do the vocabulary assignment for English class. *malevolence malice misogyny*. Mutely, I practice the pronunciation: *ma le vo lence*. Taste the word on my tongue . . . let it slide down my throat like cherry cough syrup . . . *ma liss* . . . like a lemon life saver . . . *mis o ji ny* . . . I swallow my way to a nearby word: *matricide*. *MATRICIDE!*

"—You can git away from this, Whitey. Git yer diploma. Find a good job. But I'm stuck here." Her needle stabs the fluffy sock. "A slave. Buh!"

Imprisoned on that couch, I wonder where Samn is prowling. Weekends, she has boasted to the whole gym class, she often drives her mother's car, or her father's, from Detroit to Chicago. *No questions asked*. Vacations: Saginaw, Petosky, Windsor: *"Take the checkbook."*

"—There was this other guy . . . I shoulda had a hatpin ready fer that devil. Yer dad, he's no diffrunt—"

I am one week past my sixteenth birthday, and I have heard as much of freaky roustabouts, blundering greenhorn girl, grudges of man-hating woman as a full-fledged social worker.

"—angora? That what you call this?" The looney eyes glare at the fluffy sock. The boney fingers squeeze it and wad it, like a hawk trouncing a chick. "You got it too soft, Cream Puff."

DON'T KILL YOUR MOTHER. My first commandment. How I needed it during the next three months, when I was cooped up with her in that hot little bungalow.

The first day of summer vacation, she moved me into her bedroom; moved my father into mine.

The minute that much-maligned man, dinnerpail under his arm, left the house for the mill, Old Yellow Eyes would heave out that monologue, like a lifeline, and hook it onto me: "The change o life. You can't imagine what I'm going through—"

Hour upon hot hour, day upon hot day, she nattered. Week upon hot week.

I had no exit. No job. Not even babysitting. The church on the corner had "some bad eggs in it." The pastor was "a fast one." The janitor had been fired from the mill for "getting fresh with the girls." I had no friends. Samn, who was the merest acquaintance, and from the other side of the tracks, had boasted to the whole class the last day of school that she was off on a tour of the whole U.S., maybe even Canada.

"Don't you dare touch that ironing, Lady of Leisure! Yer Dad'd have a fit. A *princess*, that's what he thinks you are." From the washing machine, from the stove, from the ironing board, from the kitchen floor, from the mending basket, that lifeline tugged at me. "—MEN: They're after one thing: what you're sittin on. Yer dad, you think he's diffrunt?"

I sat there, rigid, deadpan: a post.

"My! Such an awful dream I had. There was this goat that was chewin on a Bible n then—but I shouldn't tell such things to a young girl. Why, sometimes I think I must be nextdoor to *crazy!*"

The post had no mouth. It only shuddered a little with its own dreams: *The kitchen floorboards, soaked from her scrubbings, oozed an odor other than soap, other than ammonia . . . The black dinnerpail was a coffin.*

"—just lookit my varicose veins. Lookit my neck throb. Goiter, I bet. Slave, that's all I am. You still think the sun rises n the sun sets in yer dad? Buh! I could tell ya a thing r two bout that old goat—"

By July, I could no longer face my father at breakfast. "No appetite. The heat."

"You look all in, Cream Puff. Go take a nap. Go on! Lay down!"

An hour later: "An idle mind's the devil's workshop. Let me smell them fingers—"

By August, I could no longer face my father at supper, and he kept looking away from me. After a few nibbles, I'd excuse myself and go sit on the back steps, where her rantings—"Put

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me in the sylum! Go ahead!"—spliced with his sighed Bible verses, still tethered me.

The post was listening.

The post thought about words: *matricide; suicide*. Thought about Samn. Thought and thought about that Maypole-embrace.

When school opened in September, I was a zombie. I met everyone, including Samn, with the averted eye. But Samn plunged right into my numbness with a blast about her Hell-bent mom.

As eleventh grade wore on, Samn and I came to recognize one another's HURT instantly. I could read in her steaming fists, in the scribbles of her scowl, a misery like migraine: She had quarreled with her mother.

Samn could read in the hunch of my shoulders, in the glaze of my gaze, that my mother's harangue had descended upon me like a fish net.

"That bitch!" Samn would snarl to me at homeroom roll call.

"That moron!" my mouth would mutter, as if from a ventriloquist.

We'd separate for morning classes. Midmorning, in the hall, we'd encounter, briefly.

"Don't kill her!" she'd command, out of the side of her jaw, like an army sergeant.

"I won't," I'd peep, and I'd march off, reminding myself that I was pursuing a scholarship, not a prison sentence.

By gym class, the HURT had swollen to a head.

There came the day when that headache could no longer be dispersed by the Maypole-clinch in the locker room. The whirling kept whizzing like a siren. Samn grabbed me, and all but carried me out the door.

"Where's the fire?" our classmates yelled.

Sam flipped me into her car—her mother's cast-off Cadillac—and we lurched down the lanes, careened down the highway, out to the woods, and parked.

Samn knelt beside me and took my very long, very blond hair in her hands and lifted it, reverently, to her cheek . . . and dipped her whole burning face into it, as a parched traveler might do with water from a stream . . . and she kissed my hair and kissed it and kissed it . . . and she mopped her flushed face with my hair . . . as the traveler might drink and bathe in cool water.

When she drove back to school, all along the road, Queen Anne's Lace shimmied like tambourines. Dandelions pattered the picket fences like gold-mittened hammers on a xylophone. Wheat fields hummed. Clover fields sang like a choir. Halleluiah! The sun gonged in the sky.

Once a week, our sirens would whizz. Then twice. Then daily. Samn and I would hop into that Cadillac, and she would yell to dumbfounded classmates, "We're going out to lunch!"

Lunch, all right: She gobbled me. Lips, ears, pimples, throat, tears.

She would spit out her mother's latest lapse, like a bitter rind: "That whore—with the Buick salesman—the clap—"

"But don't kill her, darling!" Kiss, kiss, kiss.

And we would hug and hug, and she would unbutton my blouse . . . and I would spit out my hard pit: "That idiot—inspected my underwear—"

"Jeez! But don't kill her, Sweets!" And she would shuck off my bra like a candy wrapper and yum me and yum me . . .

Tambourines, xylophones, gongs. Topsy turvy went the noontime world.

The ritual grew too elaborate for Lovers' Lane. We transferred it to her father's cabin in the nearby woods . . . sometimes to her mother's cottage just south of town. Expertly, each would ram her grievances into the other's hot hunger. Each whirled the other into a kind of goblet that could contain all the poison of a malicious mother.

Two years of it in high school. Three years of it in college, before some voyeur reported us to the dean.

HEY! DON'T KILL YOUR MOTHER! Chorus of our girlhood. Chanted back and forth, antiphonally, and still reverberating down the years.

You'd think we'd exorcised our moms. Yet on my honeymoon, in the Louvre, in front of Gericault's portrait of "The woman afflicted with envy," I fainted.

Taxied back to our hotel, trundled by my genteel young husband to the bridal suite . . . deposited on that rosey satin bedspread, I moaned: "That portrait—that lunatic—she's my mom."

Bewildered Boy steadied his trembling hand on the bedpost, which was festooned with gilt hearts and topped with a big cupid.

"—My demented mother never kissed me," I whimpered. *'If there's one thing I hate it's a mushy person,'* she used to say. Sometimes for an eventful parting, she'd grin sheepishly, then duck down and let her lips make a little farting sound on top of my head—"

Blushing Boy withdrew from the bedpost . . . wilted into a satin chair.

"By the time I went off to college, even the splut-kiss was too tender. She just grinned and flicked me a booger from her big beak."

Blanched Boy rose and mumbled that he needed a breath of fresh air.

Alone in that Parisian bridal suite, crumpled on that passion-pink spread, I sniffled to the bedpost: "It's no wonder I succumbed to you, Samn, surrogate mother, you were all KISS."

Cupid, with the arrow frozen in his bow, listened.

"The wonder is that I could kiss back at all."

Cupid, with the arrows frozen in his quiver, listened.

Late that night the full moon, watching through the window, saw a bed that had turned into a scroll: HIS rigid body rolled to one edge, HER rigid body rolled to the opposite edge . . . and that full moon read the blankness between THEM.

Now, thirty years later, serene—or relatively serene—in our big Boston house, I am able to smile on Mother's Day. But this is a recent achievement.

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Confronting my mother's scowl daily in my mirror, tasting those festered lectures on my tongue *("Marijauna is wasted on you youngsters; I'm the one who needs it—")*, too sophisticated to make a captive audience of my daughter, too snubbed to make one of my husband, I fled to a psychiatrist.

"I was born to a witch," I told him. "I have never broken her spell."

This man listened. He was not squeamish.

"As a bride," I continued, "I believed I would float free from my mother, like a genie out of an ugly jug. Now, I'm forty, a wooden witch-mother—"

His listening was calm. Hour upon hour, week upon week, the calmness circled me.

"—and I'm a wooden wife in bed—"

The circle was more than calm, more than kind. It was kinetic. "Can you tell me about your mother?"

Hour upon hour, week upon week, I recited that litany of melodramas.

The Listening formed ladles. "No wonder your feelings are paralyzed." The ladles scooped me. "That poor wretch fed you daily doses of—lead."

"—by adolescence I had little to nourish me but the fantasy of a knight-like man—the surrogate father, I suppose—who would rescue me. Then in his place came a person as peripheral as myself—" I opened a pocket and let Samn out.

The ladles scooped me again. "I wonder—just what did Samn have that you craved?"

"Money—and that flamboyant freedom— and that stormy sensuality—"

The Listening became a waterwheel. "Surely you had something that Samn craved?"

"Compliance, I guess. I was just a puppet for her wild will."

"And a fairy-like beauty? And a gift with words?" The waterwheel was hoisting me.

"Looking back on it," I mused, "our love-making was a kind of wrestling, each struggling to wrench from the other her Terrible Lack."

The Listening laughed. "And it worked! You succeeded."

"—but then we were expelled from college. I begged Samn to kill me. She bought a pistol—and sleeping pills—"

"—and here you are, very much alive; and you've *not* killed your mother; you've killed the bad-mother side of *yourself*."

"I still snap a lot," I sighed.

"But not like a turtle."

For two years, this doctor helped me recycle my miseries into a kind of living mandala.

HEY! DON'T KILL YOUR MOTHER.

It hummed yesterday over the wires from San Francisco to Boston, like a mantra, and as I clicked Samn's voice away, my husband asked, "What are you laughing at?"

I told him, and he laughed, too.

Samn is Mrs. Winslow now, mother of two sons, and a phys. ed. teacher.

I'm a poet. Sometimes, when the moon is right, I make lunacy luminous. □

JULIA THACKER

JOHNS HOPKINS LEUKEMIC CENTER

"In Nippon resides a destiny
to become the Light of the World."
—Japanese militarist

A day smouldering in my blood
for thirty years. Bald as a row
of octopi, we wait in wigs of green
and russet for chemotherapy
to light our skin.

Although taught to look down,
I watched the B-29s every day
winging the easterly direction
of rain, silverfish turning
on their bellies in a clear sky
and our paper houses would flame.

Grandfather dove for oysters
and I, as one who walks behind,
dug the pearls out, imagining
they were his eyes or those
of the blond pilot.

Then we were the Light of the World,
the city glowing, domes like wet onions
and there were fires
on our snowy mountain peaks.

I walked past a soldier,
his face burned away, the hair
still on top of his head
like a black lacquer bowl, and men
drinking from a bloody river,
until I came to a field, untouched.

I have been born twice, once in fire,

for that day I learned to scream
into the ears of goldenrod.

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DAVID CURRY

GIBBERISH

Long after we're dead, things
will happen. They will. When this nation
is buried in time, when our love
and its objects are wiped clean,
stages of the flame will go on
like dear damned Greece. They will.
"Distinguish" and "extinguish" are separated
by just one syllable. Small matter.
One day the words will be gibberish.
The unimaginable ways and energies
centuries from now, how moments and things
declare themselves, like steps from a porch
on a house on a block in Springfield
Illinois in America in 1974, suddenly
accented by a fluke stream of light
during fog, noted in the peripheral
vision of an extant squirrel, poised
in what we've learned to think of
as prayer. He "registers" the "moment."
Good for him. It's as significant
as Waterloo. If it didn't happen,
there'd be a hole in time. A very
tired old lady who's typed invoices
all day is eating spaghetti in London
or Barcelona. Adam, waking, rose.

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THE TALKING MUTE

A STORY BY
RICHARD MARTIN

I waltzed into the post office, quit, waltzed out and let go a blood-curdling freedom whoop. All the people, some in bathing suits, strolling or scurrying around the shopping center, looked the other way, except for one old whiskery bum-like guy who grinned and tapped his hearing aid.

"I just quit," I told him.

He got serious and tapped his aid again. I got in my car and tore out of the lot.

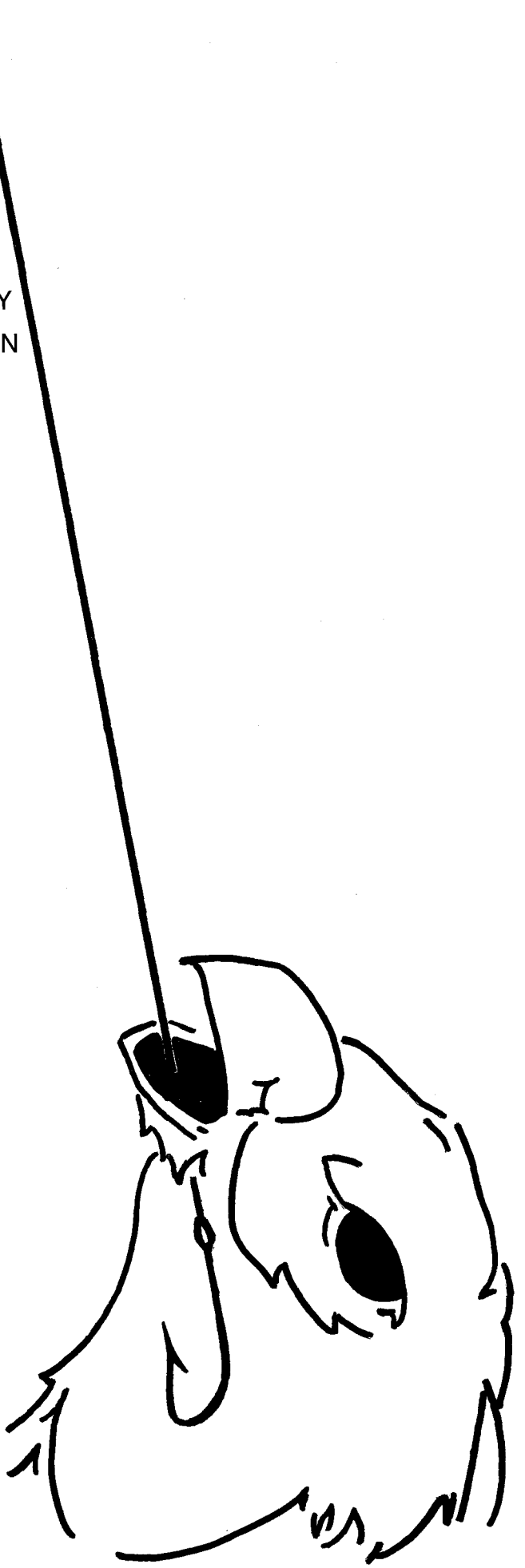
Half a mile past the pier, an Indian, somewhere in his twenties, leaned against a mailbox, hitchhiking. His burnt-earth skin and resolute countenance and mirror-black back-length hair reminded me of one of those Matthew Brady lithographs of young heritage-toughened South Dakota braves. The kind of fellow you take one look at and know you'll never get a word out of.

I pulled over; I had to tell somebody about quitting anyway. But this was no wooden Indian.

"A couple pigs just got their rocks off on my case," he said, before he'd even closed the door. "Laid their hassle on my ass."

I slipped back into traffic and glanced over to see if this could be the same lithograph I'd stopped for.

"Malibu," he said. "Malibu really loves Indians." His voice matched his skin. "They got their wheels stuck out half in the road, big black-and-white pig bus, so everybody has to slow down for a look. 'Hey, Folks, dig us doin' our thing on the native here.' " He gave his cop a pretty good Jack Webb robot



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tone. I felt him look at me. "We call it the Custer complex."

I stopped at a red light and the crosswalk bulged with bikinis. "Yeah," I said. "I know exactly how you feel, in a way. I just quit this job back there. They think they can just—"

"So they bullshit on their radio for half an hour," the Indian went on, "with their brother pigs at the station. Like little kids. Then, 'OK, you're clean,' they tell me. All smiles. 'We certainly appreciate your patience and cooperation.' " It was Jack Webb again. "Shit," he finished, in his own burnt-earth voice.

"As if you had any choice, huh?" I said. The light changed and the last bikini leaped to safety. "I mean to cooperate."

"Oh, man," he said, and threw his head back, his bright black hair slapping the back of the seat. "I had a choice once, though. I made it, too. Busted five pigs in the Springs."

I looked at him. "You arrested five cops?"

He looked at me. "I busted five pigs. You know? They were trespassing on our land. Indian land."

"You actually handcuff them and all that?"

"You get their badge numbers. Take it to court. I didn't have any pencil or anything, ya see, so I scratch their numbers in the sand."

Just as he said the word 'scratch,' we flew past a pigeon that was standing on a painted island in the middle of the highway. In my mirror an old battered northbound limousine missed the bird by a forearm, shuddering its feathers, but it didn't budge.

The Indian hadn't seen it; he was going on:

"They wipe out the badge numbers with the fascist toes of their boots. You could watch the Custer oozing out in their faces."

For a second I thought he'd said 'custard.'

"A crowd formed up, though, so they had to cool coming down on me. Palm Springs is all Indian land, you know, except a mile stretch down-town. It's shaped exactly like a fat nightstick—the downtown strip. I know—I saw it from the sky."

"What, in a plane?"

"A vision."

Rounding a curve I spotted the pigeon way back down the road before he disappeared from my mirror. We were driving right beside the ocean now.

"You ever hear of spiritual robbery?" the Indian said. "My brother made that up and we charged the pigs with it—spiritual robbery. They ripped off my mescalito."

"Ah, yeah, that's right," I said. "Mescaline's a part of your religion, right? Your ceremony?"

"Mescalito. So the judge, this mummified old fart, he laughs that out—spiritual robbery. Then he sticks it to 'em on the trespassing. Five pigs, five fines, fifty bucks a shot. It was so far out, I tell you, you wouldn't believe it if you saw it. The whole joint—the courtroom—goes crazy. Course I never saw my mescalito again. Seven buttons." He snapped his fingers.

"Wow," I said. "I know just what you're saying. It's not only cops though. It's in the air."

The Indian looked up through the windshield. "What's in the air?"

"The whole business. The . . . metaphorical air. Every time anybody opens their trap anymore, it's to put somebody else down, one way or another. I just quit this job back there at the post office."

"Capitalism sucks," he said.

"Uh, yeah. Back up the road there. They tried to stick me on Specials tomorrow—Easter."

"Easter," the Indian said. "Easter is so much more far out than Christmas. You people ought to get hip to Easter. Christmas is jive."

"So I see this on the schedule—me on Specials on Easter. Right? Well, they've been on me since I've been there anyway. Don't ask me why. I've been to college or something. People use any excuse. They're primarily a bunch of morons. They always think I'm putting them down, so they put me down. Only in little sneaky—"

I had to swerve to miss a minor rear-end accident that must have just happened. A black man had his hand on a bent fender and looked up at the empty blue sky, shaking his head.

"There but for fortune—anyway—"

"Joan Baez," the Indian said.

"Right. So anyway—where was I? Oh—so I barge into the postmaster's office. I might've knocked. Once. He just goes on with what he's doing—signing some sort of forms—like he never heard me. I was a little late, so he takes a long hard look at the clock, trying for the upper hand, because he can see I'm ready for anything. So I just said, 'What's this shit about me—' Maybe I didn't say 'shit.' I don't think I did. I just said, 'What's this about me running Specials tomorrow—Easter. You promised me Easter off.' He says, 'I didn't promise anything. I said we'd see.' "

We passed a station I'd planned to get gas at. I didn't want to interrupt the thread of the story.

"Just like Uncle's treaties with us Indians," the Indian said. " 'I didn't promise. I said we'd see.' Uncle Sham."

"Uncle Sham," I said. "That's pretty good. So, uh—so I say—to the postmaster, remember?—I say, 'You think you can give me the shaft, just because I never have anything to say around this dump?' Right away he gets real nice. Real accomodative. Cause he can see I mean business. So—let's see—so I said—that, uh . . . this—Hey, look, man," I said to the Indian and whipped off the highway and skidded to a stop in the dust of a cliff a hundred feet above the Pacific.

The Indian sat up arrow-stiff and looked around like somebody wondering where the shot came from.

"There's a pigeon back there," I said, "in the middle of the goddamn road."

The Indian relaxed. "Oh. Why didn't you say so?" He regarded the waves and rocks below. "A pigeon?"

"I should've stopped right then, damn it, but I didn't, did I? I should've said something right then. I would've stopped."

I hung a wild U across four Saturday lanes and headed back north. After I'd made the U, I saw up the road a cop I hadn't seen before I made it. He saw me too, tearing the sunglasses off his white face, but he'd already committed himself to ticketing a sad-looking woman with three or four kids and a pony-sized mutt in a station wagon whose wired-on muffler hung like an albatross.

"Look at that sucker," the Indian said, holding on and waving back at the fuming cop. "Did it look hit?"

"The pigeon? I don't know. I don't think so. It look stunned. Hypnotized sort of. Just standing there. If that damn thing is squashed I'll puke. Why didn't I say something?" I meant to hit the wheel but I hit the horn instead and the Indian jumped.

By the time we got back to the spot the bird was gone. I had it already pictured spread around somebody's radial, but an old man with a brown bald head, walking up a dirt road just off

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the highway, had his hands cupped around what turned out to be our bird.

It wouldn't make a sound, and didn't fight being held, but kept blinking, as if stars and bells were going off in its head, which was the size of a big toe. It didn't look very intelligent at the moment, but there wasn't any blood or bones sticking out.

"He's in shock, " the old man told the Indian and me. He had a bronchitis voice and ritzy sports clothes. "I'll take him to the clinic."

"The animal hospital?" I said. "Across from the post office?"

"I guess," the old man rasped, spreading the bird's wings. "There's only one clinic."

"Yeah," I said. "It's across from the post office. I should know. Just this morning—"

"You're a good man," the Indian was telling the old man. "To stop."

"Oh," the old man said, shrugging and trying to look the blinking pigeon in the eyes, "if it wasn't me," he smiled, "it'd be you. Or the next guy."

"I didn't know birds blinked," I said, rolling south again with the Indian. "I didn't think they even had eyelids. Owls do though, don't they? Eyelashes and everything."

"I watched this hawk die once," the Indian said. "Swallowed a fish-hook."

"Gad," I said. "How'd you—"

"Part of the line was hanging out of his mouth. He was hacking blood. Screaming every once in a while, staring at the sky. Like there was a witch inside it that wanted out. It took a long time to die."

"You could've—Could you've killed it?"

"Maybe. But we didn't. It was me and my brother. We just watched. He couldn't stand up after awhile. This hooked beak. Claws reaching around, grabbing the air. He wouldn't let us near him. I'll never forget his eyes—this hot kind of gray color. Like this statue I saw once."

"Gad," I said, slowing down for a jaywalking bikini. "What'd you—"

"Finally he gets still enough where I could hold him. He's breathing like some movie star just before they croak. I felt the last sort of shake, or rattle, or whatever you want to call it, when he went. All his breath goes out in a whistle and he just stops, like if you turn your radio off." He reached out and turned my radio on and off.

"It's busted," I said.

"But what was really strange was, this all happened in the desert. Way past the Springs. A hundred miles at least from water or anywhere a fish could be, or a fisherman."

"How you know it was a fishhook in it?" I said.

"We pulled a little autopsy. Before we buried him. My brother's got a Ph.D. in that stuff. It was a fishhook all right. My brother's still got it, around his neck."

"Jesus," I said. "Wow. I don't know about that one."

The Indian gave me a look. "You don't know about what one?"

"The whole story you just told. It sounds like a parable or something."

"How do you mean parable?"

"Legend? I don't know. Myth?"

He was still looking at me. "It's a true story. Why should I lie?"

"I didn't say—I didn't mean *lie*. I meant it sounds like it means something more than just a story that happened to accidentally happen once. I meant it sounds like it means more than it seems to . . . mean. I don't know. I just have a habit of trying to figure out what things mean. *Sig*nify."

"That there's your first big mistake," the Indian said.

"That's what I hear," I said. "How far'd you say you're going anyway?"

"I didn't, " the Indian said, "but Sunset'd be perfect."

2.

It's hectic to stop there, right where Sunset ends at the Coast Highway. Especially the Saturday before Easter. There's no place to pull off, so you stop, quick, in the far right lane, do whatever you have to do, quick, and split.

A barefoot blonde kid happened to be hitching at the very spot I stopped to let the Indian hop out. The kid thought we were stopping just to pick him up, that the Indian was getting out to let him in the back, for the kid jumped in—the back—as the Indian slammed the door and hollered, "Off the pigs!"

I re-entered the holiday rush. "Urgent little exchange, Sir," I pronounced, chauffeur-like, into the mirror at the kid in the back.

He didn't say anything, or even look at me, but smiled out the side window at the packed passing beaches.

"Where you headed?" I asked, over my shoulder, supposing the jazz of traffic too loud for him to hear me otherwise.

He smiled again, this time right at me, but just as if I hadn't asked a question, as if I'd only turned to look at him.

I regarded myself in the mirror. I shouted, "I said where are you going!"

He didn't smile, but he scratched his ear. He was watching the colored beach houses float by like a cartoon freight train.

I wondered—Maybe the kid's deaf. "Are you deaf?" I hollered. "*Are . . . you . . . deaf*!" I hollered again, then weighed the absurdity of having hollered it.

I thought I saw him shake his head as I swung my eyes back to the road just in time to see myself run a red light.

"You're not deaf," I affirmed. "That's very nice. I thought you might be deaf, because I noticed that you don't have that much to say when I ask you something."

The smile came in the mirror.

What kind of a smile would I say it was? It was the kind of a smile that appeared eager to be exactly whatever kind of a smile I thought it should be.

"You on anything?" I asked into the mirror, frowning.

The smile again, an unstoned smile, now that I gauged it better. His silence seemed too innocent and comfortable for dope to be the cause.

"You can't talk?" I asked.

He shrugged just like the old pigeon-rescuing man when the Indian told him he was good. The kid's silence was thinning ice my talking skated in circles on.

"You won't talk?"

He actually shook his head.

"You just aren't talking."

The golden smile, full blast.

"Hmm," I said. I was fed up to here with talking, one-way,

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into the mirror, or over my shoulder, *at* some kid I didn't owe a thing to, at some kid who, if anything, owed *me* something, if only friendly chatter, for the ride, and at some kid who, besides, had me playing his game, whatever it was.

To even the odds a little, I pulled into a beach parking lot and got him up in the front seat.

"This look like some sorta personal driveway, Pal?" the fat lot attendant barked in my window. He was chewing what looked like white mud but what was actually half-cooked french fries.

"Watch out, man!" I shrieked. "Don't get too close! Watch out!"

The swollen attendant yanked his greasy tanned hand off my door, spilling half his fries. "Shhhh-it!" he said. "You—"

"The kid here's got the Mute Rot," I explained. "He can't talk. Your tongue gets moldy and melts. I may have it myself by now. It's probably all over the car." I held my hand out to him. "My God, look at these orange bumps here!"

The attendant was still mourning his spilled fries. He spoke through his corrupted teeth. "Get this goddamn *thing* out of here or you'll wish you had a rot. Look at what you did to my goddamn french fries."

Back on the road and maneuvering for the freeway entrance, the kid beside me, I got my first good look at him: clean but wear-bleached Levi's; faded space-blue t-shirt under a nice big coat with an orange furrish collar, which I wondered why he had on on such a warm afternoon; eyes the same high space tint as his t-shirt; sandy bare feet; spaghetti-colored, spaghetti-length hair; some sort of a patch on a thong around his neck, mostly hidden by the coat; waned acne; about 19; calm face, if not happy. Your average American lad with a B-minus average in Junior College who gets up extra early one average morning and hacks his snoozing family to average shreds.

"I guess you wouldn't be interested in hearing how I quit today," I said.

The kid raised his eyebrows and put his hands in his coat pockets.

"Yeah, I quit. I was telling the Indian. Before we went back for the shocked pigeon. I was up to where I went and got the schedule and flung it on the postmaster's desk. It slid off, you see, his desk is so polished, and when he reaches down for it his forehead slams against the desk. Solid oak or something. Crack! Pretty funny, huh? What do you say?"

He made a face and shook his head and touched his own forehead.

"You ever call one of these radio talk shows?" I asked.

He looked away.

"Any ideas at all?" I said. We were on the freeway now.

He frowned, of all things.

"About where you want to get out, I mean."

His left hand shot up at the roof as if on a string and his right slipped inside his coat. I thought I glimpsed the black handle of a knife coming out. It was his wallet.

He shuffled through several old fold-worn scraps of paper, studying them like a patient might examine parts of a psychiatric puzzle. They were addresses, fairly distant—those I caught sight of—downtown L.A. and the Valley. He didn't seem to be making any sense of them. They could have been addresses from a wallet he'd found in a phone booth.

"Look, make up your mind, OK? I'm getting off pretty soon up here. You want to go to L.A. or what? That's straight ahead. You want to go straight ahead?"

He put the wallet away and stared straight ahead, as if trying to determine whether straight ahead was important enough to figure out if he wanted to go there. We could have been out for a little drive on Saturn. I had the feeling his mind was fading out, like a radio.

"Speak," I said. "I'm not deciding for you—if that's your trip."

He looked at me, or rather he showed me his empty face. I felt like he wanted me to promise not to shoot him in the back if he tried to escape.

The idea I'd had on emergency hold found its way into speech. I got off the freeway at Cloverfield and said, "We'll go see a friend of mine then, all right? OK?"

His instant smile and nodding radiated actual enthusiasm. Contact at last, I thought.

We were stopped at the red light at the foot of the off-ramp. The kid opened the door, hopped out, tore his coat off in one careless sweeping arc of action, hopped back in, tossed the coat in the back, slammed the door as the light went green, and grinned at me as if he'd accomplished a deed for which he deserved to display as much pride as he could muster. I wondered again why he'd had the coat on in the first place, warm as it was.

Just as I started to get a look at that patch-on-a-thong thing around his neck, he tucked it inside his t-shirt and a car behind us honked.

3.

We pulled up in front of an old red house with a yardful of wheat-tall weeds.

"I'll see what's cooking," I said. I got out, highstepped the weeds, and bounced up the makeshift broken-brick front steps.

With my fist up to knock I remembered my keys. I'd left them in the ignition. How could I retrieve them without tipping the kid off to how much I distrust him, jeopardizing thereby the whole possible adventure? At the same time, I thought, why *should* I trust him? He won't even talk. How much adventure is there in having your car stolen? Even by a mute.

I knocked anyway.

No answer.

I turned and saw the kid eyeing me, dead-pan. I smiled. He didn't. Waiting, I thought, for his chance. I knocked again.

"Who is it?" Stephanie's voice came muted through the door. The shades were all drawn.

"Me," I said. "David."

"Uh . . . ," said Stephanie. "Just a second."

She opened the door, standing behind it. I slipped in and she closed it. It was dark in there. She turned and I turned and she put on a light and that was all she put on. Sleepy-faced and lovely as naked could be stood she. I flashed on the ordeal the kid probably would have gone through had he come in with me. Would he have even talked?

"Hi," I said. "For starters."

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Stephanie laughed her nice laugh and rubbed an eye and kept being naked. She said, "You haven't been around."

"I'm around right now," I said. "How've *you* been?"

"Oh—"

"You look pretty good."

She covered her breasts and blinked and blinked and said, "Thank you, Sir." She threw a shawl over her shoulders but it just made it better. "Been writing at all?"

"Ah . . . nah. Been sortin' letters at the old Post Office mainly. No more though—this morning I finally—"

"Oh, David. Thanks for reminding me." She touched my arm with her naked hand which was connected to the rest of her. "I totally forgot to mail my income tax thing."

Like I said, it was pretty dark in there. Maybe she has something else on, besides the shawl. Some pale, silk, slip-like, skin-colored, see-through thing I can't focus on, coming so suddenly out of bright clear sunlight. Vague waves of something warming and violet-feeling and bass-pitched circulated through my torso.

"Jeff around?" I said. "I picked this kid up—hitching. He won't talk, or isn't, or just doesn't want to, or . . ."

"Oh, God," Stephanie said, scratching her upper right arm. "Another weirdo."

"I don't know. Most weirdos talk, so you can tell right away. I don't know. I just didn't want to dump him, like ballast. Maybe his voice is just breaking. I don't know. He seems really vulnerable. Not sticking up for anything. I don't know. I figured Jeff might—"

"Oh, God," Stephanie said again. "Don't show him to Jeff. He's already fasting. I can see it now. He won't talk himself for a month." She was sort of toying with her hair. Trying to find some part of her that I didn't feel stung looking at was like looking for a dark spot on the filament of a lit bulb. The shawl slipped off her shoulders and she left it in a pool at her feet. "He walked up to Thriftimart."

"Who?" I said.

"Jeff," she laughed. "I needed some lemons for tea." She bent one leg a little.

Jeff was a lawyer who abandoned the bar and picked up a guitar. He and I got along pretty well, as long as we didn't talk too much. When we did talk, we got along even better, for awhile, but sooner or later got into logjams of personality or philosophy or just plain words.

Stephanie straightened the bent leg, and bent the straight.

Jeff I was sure would prize the mute, the kid, or at least what he was up to, whatever it was. I didn't know how much help, if any, or of what sort, the mute needed, or how much he would let himslef receive, or from whom.

I peeked out a window and saw my car and the mute just like I left them. I think he had his eyes closed. Mumbling some Sanskrit syllable, no doubt. To himself I mean. What did that thing sound like anyway? His voice. Did it fit his face, his grin, his age, his eyes? Was it even there, inside there? Was there a genie in the bottle at all? He did have his eyes closed. He ought to put cotton in his nose and ears, I mused, then he'd be all set.

Stephanie was still there. I wondered if she could possibly be unaware of my awareness of her nakedness, of the dynamics of the situation. I mean, what was I talking about? Here was this perfectly winsome young creature, standing with one leg bent, four feet from me, bare as a photograph in a magazine, conversing with me as if we'd bumped into each other over the lemons at the supermarket, which is exactly where the man she was living with was. I felt some call to say a word or two about what was going on, but at the same time I sensed that we'd silently agreed to skirt the issue.

"*New Seeds of Contemplation*," I muttered, picking up off the arm of the couch the book whose title that was. "I guess we could go pick him up," I said, my eyes on the photograph of a field of what looked like pussywillows on the cover of the book.

"Who?" Stephanie said. "Thomas Merton?"

I looked up and saw her face tilted and peering and she smiled and we laughed and shifted our feet around.

"Jeff," I said. "Remember that guy? Jeff?"

"I mean who's 'we?' You said *we* were—or *could*—"

"Oh, Me and the mute. The kid."

"He's *here*?" she said, grabbing the shawl around her and peeking out. "I thought you said you took him to your place."

"What'd you think I was looking at out there a while ago?"

"I thought you were just nervous or something," she said.

"What would I have to be nervous about?"

"Got me," she said.

"No," I said. "I said—I thought I said . . ."

I recapped the quitting up to the part where the postmaster slammed his forehead into the desk.

"So he tells me no, there's no mistake," I told Stephanie, who sniffled like people do when they aren't staying tuned in to what somebody else is saying. "You got Easter Specials, he tells me. Lew was on originally, he says, but his father had a heart attack. In Philadelphia. No warning. At least they think it's a heart attack. So I say, How is it I'm exclusively the one who gets stuck filling in on these . . . sudden attack deals. I'm no vulture, I said, so why does it seem like everybody in this post office has a doomed aunt or somebody somewhere, just waiting for my day off so they can finally collapse? That's what I told the postmaster, see. So—"

"Look," said Stephanie, "is it OK if I put something on?"

"You don't have anything on?"

She laughed. "I just don't know how long this story is."

It was getting either darker or lighter in there. We both started to say something, stopped to let the other go ahead, laughed at that, then I said:

"I'll just go get Jeff. That'll simplify everything."

"Then go," she said. "Go get Jeff. Go simplify everything. Go go go," and she pushed me out the door. I half-faked a stumble down the steps and fell in the deep weeds. I didn't move and didn't say anything, but she didn't come to check on me and I thought I heard a snake so I got up.

The mute was getting out of the car, his coat in his hand. He didn't look happy. I must have been up there awhile.

"Come on, Gabby," I said, taking his coat. "Jeff—that's my friend—he walked to the store for some lemons. We'll go get him. Simplify, OK?"

The mute shrugged and got in.

We found Jeff halfway home, a lemon in each hand, sauntering along the sidewalk in a cartoon of peace, his hair and beard flowing behind him as if he were under water, framing an apple face.

Working out in my head the introductions I'd give them, I stopped in the middle of the road and a huge '56 Buick almost rammed us from behind. The distinguished-looking little old gentleman driving gave me the finger as he went around. I greeted Jeff super-cheerily.

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The mute jumped in the back so Jeff could have the front.

"This," I said to Jeff, "is my new acquaintance who is not talking. Not a word. Not a Sanskrit syllable. Just golden silence." How proud I sounded! So I added, "Gilded, maybe."

Jeff grinned over his shoulder and said "ah" and nodded to the mute. The mute gave his shaking hand to Jeff, an offer he hadn't made me. I tried to remember if Jeff and I had shaken hands when we met three years before. I remembered what we'd talked about—"Clockwork Orange"—but I couldn't remember if we'd shaken hands.

In the mirror the mute appeared to really like being in that back seat again.

The three of us walked in with the two lemons. Stephanie, clad now in a gauzy, floor-length, body-shaded get-up that she could have almost had on all along, strolled in from the kitchen and asked about tea and toast. The place was flooded with sunshine from the opened blinds.

Jeff sank into his huge rainbow-upholstered easy chair, opposite the mute and me on the couch, and picked at his guitar. The two of them got along swell, grinning and nodding like Cheshires with a fat secret in a pear tree.

Stephanie bustled in with a tray of lemons and honey and toast and tea that smelled like hot hay. The mute wolfed his toast while the rest of us got a little small talk going.

I started telling everybody how it got started—with the quitting. I got up to where . . .

"The postmaster leans way back in his chair, with this acre of black oak between us, and tells me he thinks I think everything's a conspiracy."

"You do," said Stephanie.

"It is," I said. "Anyway—he tells me I'm just the low man on the old totem pole. He says it's not half as sinister as I'd like to think it is."

"It's not," Stephanie said, sipping her hay.

"I know," I said. "It's twice as sinister."

"You people talk like he's some stuffed thing on the table," Jeff said, continuing to play, softly, as though his words were lyrics to a talking song, "or not even here at all."

The mute was looking mildly thunderstruck, thumbing through Stephanie's glossy collection of Van Gogh's stuff.

"Who?" I asked Jeff. "The postmaster?"

Jeff indicated the mute with his chin. "My . . . silent partner there."

"I wasn't even up to him yet," I said. "I was still back in the post office quitting."

"Before," Jeff said.

"What are we supposed to do?" I said. "The kid's not talking, right? So we have to be indirect, we have to circumvent. It's his game; so it's our rules."

The mute deepened his examination of the self-portrait with a severed ear. He touched the bandage.

I scalded my tongue on the hay. I forgot about the quitting story. I whispered to Stephanie, "I told him I'd get him on Johnny Carson. Here he is, folks—Gabby Hayes, Junior."

Stephanie didn't laugh. She crossed her legs. "You're getting obnoxiously funny," she said.

Jeff stopped playing and the mute and he swapped a few martyred looks.

Stephanie gathered up cups and plates and toast crumbs and the mute closed Van Gogh and started doing something. He was lighting matches from a Bluetip box, one at a time, watching with undisguised glee as it burned toward his fingertips. He let each match get as close as he could before inexpertly blowing and shaking it out. It was as if he'd never seen a match before. He did about half a dozen like that. I didn't say anything and somehow Jeff and Stephanie didn't seem to notice.

"I gotta get home," I said. "I gotta feed my cat." I mainly wanted the home advantage.

"Wanna go?" I asked Jeff. "Talk or something? Not talk or something?"

Jeff looked at Stephanie. She shook her head. "I've got some things I want to do here," she said.

Jeff looked at the mute and then me. "Let's go not talk or something," he said.

4.

Jeff played "Pack Up Your Sorrows" in the back seat on the short ride to my place. Nobody talked.

I dropped my sweater unpocketing the key to my apartment. The mute copied me, cheerfully dumping his big good coat in the ivy beside the door. He must have thought it a local custom. I brought both garments in, the only local custom being to grab anything in sight and assay it later.

Jeff lay on my unmade bed and picked random chords, not more than half of them off.

"Let me make it first, will you, man?" I said. "It depresses me, unmade beds."

Jeff went all the way into the other room. I wondered if he thought I meant I didn't want him lazing around on my open sheets, or if he figured it was my idea of a power play, now that the action had shifted to my turf, or if his feelings were bruised because his bed was normally a scramble.

I put out food for my big gray cat, who ignored it in favor of sniffing the mute's coat. I put on some Van Morrison I thought Jeff might enjoy playing along with. The mute pointed at the stereo and nodded approval.

"Van Morrison," I said. "Droll rock. You people hungry at all?" Full bellies lead to easy conversation, I figured.

"I'm fasting," said Jeff from the other room.

The mute shrugged, then vimlessly nodded.

"Potatoes?" I suggested. "And beans? And carrots? And Loma Linda hot dogs? All sliced together and heated up? And orange juice?"

The mute nodded for real and appetite grew like a cheer on his face.

I didn't watch him eat. I heard. I fed myself on the floor by the bed where my cat had settled to watch the proceedings. The mute ate at the kitchen table, not hearing, or not caring to hear, my offer to eat with me on the floor. Van Morrison ran out and Jeff played on by himself in the other room.

"You sure you don't want to break your fast a little?" I asked Jeff.

"You sure you don't want to get a little pregnant?" he answered.

I found my harmonica behind the bed and blew some. That brought Jeff in. The mute walked out and started washing the dishes.

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"You don't have to do that, Gab," I called out.

"Maybe he wants to," Jeff said.

I went out there. I wanted everybody in the same room, close, so something could happen. "Really, look," I said. "The water heater's on the fritz. My landlord's this bastard. I need the hot water for a shower tonight." I remembered quitting. I had all day tomorrow, all Easter, to take a shower.

That brought the three of us finally alone together. Jeff started playing again; I played along a little; the mute listened on a full stomach.

I stopped and tapped the harp on my palm and dropped it on my cat's chest. He attacked it.

"So where are you from anyway?" I casually asked the mute.

The mute watched my cat attacking the harmonica.

"What difference does it make?" Jeff asked me, looking at the mute.

The mute smiled at the cat.

"It makes a lotta difference," I said, "A hell of a lot. Anyway, what're you, his interpreter?"

They looked at each other.

"If you want to find out where someone is," I said, "you have to know where they've been first."

"You want to know where he is?" Jeff said. "He's right here."

"That's bullshit," I said. "This table's right here. This cat's right here." I turned to find my cat gone from where he'd been two seconds before. "Wherever the hell he is." I looked back and he was on the mute's lap. "Why not be a cat? Why be a man? Or a kid? Does he have anything more going on in him than the wood in this table?"

"You'd probably be surprised at what's going on inside him." Jeff said.

"That's what I want to find out, man. That's what I'm asking."

"Hmm. I thought you asked him where he's from."

"Those are just the words of the question. If he told me where he's from, he'd reveal so much more than just the simple name of some damn town. What somebody says about where they're from, the way they say it, fast or slow, shy or bold, their tone of voice, the words they choose to describe what they remember, or feel, about where they're from, their home. If they look you in the eye, how they react to their own words after they've finished."

Jeff sighed. "If he said L.A., you'd find all that out? You make talk sound like brain surgery."

The unsmiling mute was watching me, squinting at me actually.

"Could be the other way around," Jeff went on. "Maybe words are like a big wardrobe—to strut around and hide in. Stuff to fill up time and silence with, like furniture, shoving it around the room, collecting it, just to have something there, something to do, when emptiness would have done fine."

"Oh, emptiness is fine, is it?" I said. "Even if it is, which it isn't, you still had to use words to get that said."

"Words have their place, all right," said Jeff, "they just have to be kept in it."

The mute reached inside his t-shirt and brought out that previously unidentified patch-on-a-thong thing from around his neck. He displayed it for us in his open palm, smiling proudly.

I couldn't believe it. It was a patch, a military patch, and the identical duplicate of the very military patch of the armored division I'd been a member of for eleven months in Vietnam. This was too coincidental to be coincidence. The mute was too young to have been over there himself. Or was he, now that I noticed the lines around his eyes, now that I realized again how much information his stilled voice held back. Damn it, I thought, I've got to get him to talk.

Jeff was appreciating the patch, blasting cannon, lightning bolt and all. "It's uh . . . really something," Jeff congratulated him. The mute smiled and nodded and stuffed the patch back in his shirt. He was sitting on my bed in a lotus, looking down at Jeff and me on the floor. He seemed simple and plain and honest and harmless and happy. There was just something awry in that innocence, or incomplete, or unearned maybe. I thought the only way to find out what it was was to just go ahead and ask.

"You know what that patch stands for?" I asked the mute.

"He doesn't care what it stands for," Jeff said. "It's colorful. It's a nice triangle shape. It's got neat things on it. It's pretty."

I looked the mute in the eye. "What's your name?"

The mute looked down on me blankly. I looked back at him too long without blinking and got the sensation I was being slowly lowered through the floor.

"That's the same as asking where he's from," Jeff said.

"It's not," I said. "I should've asked his name first. Names are what it's all about. Words *are* names. Without names there wouldn't even be anything, because everything would sort of be the same as everything else. If everybody didn't talk, never used the names of stuff, it would be total . . . *nothing*. What did God do? He tells Adam, right off the bat—Name This Stuff. The one act man got to do all by himself—name everything. Wow, imagine that. Going around—"

"He could give you a phony name," Jeff interrupted.

"Good. Great. All the better. A phony name he picks himself."

"Listen, David," Jeff said, touching my arm a second, "really. Can't you see how clear and true he is, sitting up there, wordless, still, simple, nothing to explain, nothing to defend—compared to us blabbering down here about whether or not he should talk, whether or not he should emit a bunch of arranged letters from a slot in his face?"

I thought about it. I held my chin. I wasn't saying it right. Something was missing. I'd left something out. I'd gotten off the track. I knew I knew what I wanted to say; I just needed time.

"How long you gonna keep this up?" I asked the mute. He was watching his folded hands. "I mean, OK, you're not talking now, but what do you want to do tomorrow? Next year, the rest of your life."

The mute and Jeff looked at each other as if they were sharing the burden of teaching an aborigine the rudiments of nuclear fission, not too much disdain in their expressions, for the native was showing signs of frustration that could render him dangerous.

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I stood up. "I'm gonna go get some beer."

I was surprised, going out, to find it dusk already, and quickly clouding up.

5.

Jeff was picking his guitar when I got back. The mute sat on the floor in my old spot.

I poured the mute a glass of beer without asking, and he lit into it with an amateur gusto, exhibiting a joy he had shown before only taking his coat off, looking forward to visiting, lighting matches, listening to the stereo, eating, and sitting in the back seat. I bet myself he loved sleep.

He downed most of the first quart we shared. Jeff abstained. The mute drank too fast and burped a lot. He either enjoyed it greatly or wanted to get zonked quick, or both.

Halfway through the second quart, the mute went into the bathroom.

"Did he talk?" I asked Jeff.

"Who?"

"Who? Him! When I was gone. Did he asy anything?"

Jeff looked at me. "He—" he said, and the mute returned.

I was sick of it all. The time had come to rip the whole thing open, wide. The mute reclined on my bed like a prince and pulled my bottle toward his mouth.

"Do you," I addressed the mute, pausing district attorney-like, "by any chance, happen to have some sort of love affair with fire?"

The mute sat up. His face went hard, stiff. He put the bottle down and gave Jeff a searching look, as if Jeff had helped me plan the question. A crisis had arisen that made their comradery as relevant as a rabbit's foot on Doomsday. Jeff didn't know what was happening.

"You're crazy about fire, aren't you?" I told the mute. I wanted something to happen. I didn't care if he talked or not. "I watched you lighting up those matches, over at Jeff's. You really got into that, didn't you, Gab? You were practically drooling."

The mute looked at Jeff for help. Jeff looked at me.

"Or else you were just trying to give us some kind of mysterious dangerous stranger image. Grinning away at your little torches. Was that supposed to *mean* something?"

The mute had his mouth open, looking around the room as if it had no doors or windows.

"That's just about what your big deal silence trip comes down to," I said. "Playing with matches. Interesting for awhile, but meaningless, and pretty damn safe."

The mute stood and put his coat on. He shook hands with Jeff. They shared a long look that went from probing to happy. The mute's face emptied as he turned to me. It wasn't hateful, just empty. He put his hand out and I found myself shaking it. There were some other things I wanted to say, but I didn't. He opened the door. It was starting to drizzle, and almost dark. The mute walked out, leaving the door open.

Jeff and I didn't look at each other or say anything. Then he jumped up with his guitar and went out. I followed him.

The mute was standing by the signal half a block away, his thumb out. The drizzle felt as weightless as the thought of drizzle. It was as if the drizzle were standing still and the planet were floating up into it. Jeff started walking toward the mute.

"Where you going?" I asked him.

"I think I want to go with him."

I didn't say anything. Jeff stopped and came back.

"You want to talk?" he asked. "You want me to stay? You want to talk?"

I hadn't thought about it, but when he asked me, suddenly I didn't know.

"You want to talk, don't you?" Jeff said.

"Yeah . . . maybe. No. I don't know."

We looked down the dark wet street and saw the mute getting into an old pick-up. The signal changed; he was gone.

We stood in the drizzle, like in a painting. It was getting darker and wetter.

"Did he talk?" I asked. "When I went for beer?"

Jeff just kept looking down where the mute had gone.

"Did he?" I asked.

"Sure, he talked."

"He *did*?"

Jeff nodded.

"Well, what did he say, man?"

"Not much."

"What did he *say*?"

"He uh . . . kind of answered your question."

"What question? His name?"

"About what he wanted to do. Tomorrow, the rest of his life."

I waited.

"He just said, 'The same thing, really.' "

"The same thing, really?" I said.

"The same thing, really."

"What the hell's that supposed to mean?"

"I guess it means more of what he's doing now."

I snorted. "Which is more of nothing."

Jeff bent down and touched the wet sidewalk.

"That's all?" I asked. "That's all he said?"

"He talked about you."

"Oh, he did, did he? This should be interesting."

"He sort of made suggestions. He said you maybe shouldn't get so mad at, uh, the other side. That's what he called it. The other side. You would've liked the way he hunted around for words. For the right word."

"What other side? Mad at what other side?"

"The silent side. The nothing side. Still side. He said something about the death side."

"The death side?" I said. "What does he know about death? He was just trying to freak you out, Jeff. Did he know you were going to tell me what he said? What was with that punk, Jeff? Did you catch his face when I brought up the matches, the fire trip? What the hell was—He *knew* I was watching him monkey around. It was a show, plain and simple. And that damn patch—you probably won't believe this—"

Jeff was deep breathing with his eyes shut.

"The death side," I finished. "Baloney."

Jeff gave me a glance of something that too much resembled pity.

"Go on, though," I said. "I really want to hear this."

"That's all. The death side. The still side. He said silence, nothing, lets you go on all you want pretty much, talk, move around, lets you play around with . . . things, words, people even. You ought to let nothing have its day, too. Let silence play. Even let death play."

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I waited till I was sure that was it. Then: "That goofball kid said all that, huh?"

Jeff blinked up into the drizzle. I knew we were getting gradually drenched, but going in before I'd found out whatever I had to find out seemed more absurd than standing out in the rain.

We looked at each other, our faces all wet. "You made every word of that up," I said softly. "The whole thing. All that stuff."

Jeff smiled and then got his straight face back. "Yeah. I did."

I shook my head and looked at what he'd said in a new way. "Why?"

He thought about it. "It's not all that often a person gets the chance to say something and be positive that the person listening is really listening. It was a real opportunity."

I heard the drizzle landing on my hair and shoulders and felt deep inside myself and dense there and far from feeling it, the drizzle.

"We're getting pretty wet," Jeff said softly.

We went in. Nobody said anything, then I drove him home.

6.

Some people can travel around everywhere all by themselves. I need somebody, to talk to, in case something comes up. The radio in my car's busted, so after I dropped Jeff off I went home and got my cat and we were on our way. I had to stop at the signal down the street. The drizzle fell as lightly as it could.

"So the postmaster says he doesn't care what the hell holiday it is," I told my cat. "Somebody's got to run Specials, he says. Easter, Halloween, goddamn Doomsday."

The signal turned green and we headed off down toward the Coast Highway.

"I gave the old Post Office one last look, turned, looked the postmaster in the eye, and said, de*clared*, clear as a bell, 'I quit.' "

By the time I turned onto the Highway my cat was curled up sound asleep in the back seat. I figured the kid, the mute, would still be headed south. I knew I'd find him again, and I could already see myself pulling over, and his silent face, streaked like a window with rain, lighting up. □

DANIEL HALPERN

LETTER TO THE MIDWEST

You would notice the humor: storks
at work in the fields collecting seeds,
the pointing tips of djellabas
that stick up at odd angles —
closer to God, perhaps. The palms are dramatic,
waving wildly in wind. At their centers
the rust colored fronds remain still.
You, of course, see the irony in this.
The rain stops and starts all day,
the horns left over from the Europeans'
New Year still sound in every street.
It's exotic all right.
It makes me gloomy and I imagine
snow fields without storks, corn instead of kif,
and little children off to school,
their hair lighter than snow,
speaking English, their mothers' kisses
still blossoming on their rosy cheeks.
But it is dusk here,
veiled figures go by outside my window,
the lights across the Straits begin to appear.
The bats have begun to feed, and the starlings,
in a frenzy, circle, and float home.

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R.D. SWETS

TWO POEMS

TONIGHT IN THE NIGHTMARE

Tonight in the nightmare
I will dig up the old dream
of swimming in air.
I will dream it all night,
over and over again.

When I wake up,
I will be standing,
gasping for air,
at the top of some tall building,
hair still dripping, shaking
my head to get the water
out of my ears.

WINTER PREPARATIONS

The frost has finally
eaten into the ground.
How cold and hard
it has become for winter:
your skin, grandmother.

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Lucien Stryk

Two Japanese Conversations

1. Painter & Poet

Koichi Awakawa, 76, one of Kyoto's most distinguished painters and poets, is a legendary figure whose work is esteemed in Japan and highly regarded in the West. I have wondered at his remarkable sumie scrolls in museums and galleries, known for years of his collection of art works, often referred to in books on Zen. Entering his house, virtually a museum, I stand in the largest room filled with painting and calligraphy hung behind glass. Works by masters like Ryokan and Sengai—the latter being his favorite, Awakawa informs me, of all Zen artists. On the wall there is a photograph of the artist next to Sengai's tomb in Hakata, where he had served as Zen master in the last half of the 18th century and well into the 19th, dying in 1837. Near the photograph, in Sengai's very distinctive calligraphy, hangs his death poem.

Koichi Awakawa greets me warmly and immediately begins to show me his house. He is taller than the average Japanese, thin, delicately featured, slightly stooped, and like all the Zennists I know he moves and speaks vitally. He is clearly proud of his collection, and has for many years kept his house open to those interested in Zen arts. Admirers have come from America, where he himself lectured at universities like Harvard and Stanford, also giving demonstrations of sumie technique. In telling of these experiences he becomes highly animated, offering to do a sumie for me on the spot, on any subject. I tell him Daruma (Bodhidharma) would please me greatly. Without ado he kneels, mixes some ink wash, and in minutes brushes a fine one, very much in the manner of Sengai. I am thrilled and honored, for though I do not tell him, I have longed for some time to own one of his works, of which I've seen a number at an art shop near my room in central Kyoto, but they are far beyond my means. When finished he holds up the Daruma for inspection, very pleased at my response. I am overwhelmed receiving such a gift. Placing it in a large folder of fine paper, he hands it to me with a slight bow.

I feel he is anxious to tell me of his life and work, but kindly offers to take me to the other rooms before we start. In the handsome study books are everywhere, many volumes of poetry, which since he is also a fine poet he esteems. Toward the back of the house we enter a room with many precious ceramics, then a storehouse-room for works not currently displayed. There he hands me tea bowls to examine, and each time I express delight, for they are very beautiful, he beams, speaking briefly, lovingly of each piece. He tells with reverence of his Zen master, Mumon Roshi, a very wise man some of whose writings I know. After we have had refreshment, we return to the museum-room where, cross-legged on cushions, surrounded by his glorious collection, we begin our conversation.

Stryk: Sengai must be very dear to you. The fine Daruma with which you have honored me is very much in his spirit—he happens to be one of the masters whose poems I have translated. I see the photo of you at his tomb, and notice you also have his death poem displayed.

Awakawa: Yes, he is my favorite—in painting and in poetry. His genius was inexhaustible.

Stryk: You must be aware of the great interest in him in the West?

Awakawa: Indeed, I was often asked about him in America. As you may know the British critic Herbert Read spoke of him as one from whom all Western artists might learn.

Stryk: As painter do you consciously follow him?

Awakawa: I suppose I do, yes—one could do worse!

Stryk: Do you ever have misgivings about that? I mean do you feel at times your interest in him might inhibit the development of something personal?

Awakawa: I have been asked that before, always by Westerners. Perhaps we have a different conception of originality, or perhaps it is not the ideal for us. I'm not sure. I would rather be a good painter following Sengai, whose work has spiritual meaning, than a mediocre painter working without inspired guidance. The main thing surely is to preserve a priceless spirit, something we must not permit to disappear.

Stryk: I see what you mean. It may be true, what you say about the Western view of originality, and the very high store placed in it. Is your attitude peculiar to Zennists?

Awakawa: I wouldn't say so. The history of our arts demonstrates from the very beginning transmission of certain insights, and methods employed expressing them have been all-important to our artists from the start. Gives us something to strive for, much more difficult than you would imagine.

Stryk: You are not concerned, then, when your work is described as being like Sengai's?

Awakawa: Humbled, rather. But you must bear in mind that working as I do, in so definite a tradition, I will achieve something personal by the use of that tradition to depict my world, one quite different from Sengai's.

Stryk: In the things that make it up?

Awakawa: Partly—in pace, tone, coloration.

Stryk: Recently, I spoke with some haiku poets, some of whom reject outright the old haiku, even Basho's, claiming they have nothing to do with the present day. These poets consciously introduce the modern, writing of factories, automobiles, such things. Is that what you have in mind when speaking of our world being different from Sengai's?

Awakawa: I would not like to make com-

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parisons with that view, since I find deplorable such rejection of the old. I don't know what kind of haiku they write, but I'll venture they have little sensitivity if they dismiss Basho. One simply cannot be a serious poet and do that. Would a poet reject, for whatever reason, Shakespeare? I am certain fine poets think of Basho as I think of him and Sengai: there could not be good poetry today without their example, simple as that. I don't think it necessary, in order to be modern, to write of machines. Far from it. One has to be more subtle.

Stryk: You are a traditionalist in painting, using ink and brush exclusively. What of your poetry, while we're on that subject? Do you write haiku?

Awakawa: Ha, when it comes to poetry, I'm even more traditional! I write Chinese poems, using *kanji* (Chinese characters) and classical forms. Perhaps it's because I am also a calligrapher, and of course a Zennist. The great Zen poems, Chinese, Japanese, were written in the old Chinese forms. But you know all that.

Stryk: Could you tell me in detail what makes *kanji* so special for the calligrapher?

Awakawa: The Chinese character has great expressive power. There's nothing to compare with it for that.

Stryk: Could you give me an example?

Awakawa: In classical Chinese poetry nothing is left to chance, all is harmony, created in part by choice of characters, their graphic compatibility. There's balanced structure, and careful rhyming, among other things, including a very special form of parallelism. Our greatest masters—Dogen, Hakuin—wrote strictly according to Chinese rules of versification.

Stryk: But they also wrote tanka and haiku.

Awakawa: Yes, but their finest poems are in Chinese, those giving the profoundest sense of Zen. Natural enough, for their works were deeply influenced by those of the Chinese masters.

Stryk: You spoke of the expressive power of *kanji*.

Awakawa: When the brush is used, of course, not printing—but even there what I have in mind can be suggested. Surely attempts are made by the best printers. Yet it is possible for a character to say a great deal more, with the brush, than it normally means.

Stryk: That's puzzling.

Awakawa: The best kind of example might be the character for wind. Now the calligrapher without using a modifying adjective of any kind can give not only the intensity of wind, through the thickness of his stroke, but even its direction through slanting or dripping ink. And this is true of most such things. The effect of fine calligraphy can be extraordinary.

Stryk: Like painting?

Awakawa: Precisely, the relationship between the two is intimate.

Stryk: Can one in a limited sense do the same with Japanese?

Awakawa: Of course, but the nature of a syllabic language—and as you know Japanese has a syllabary—makes constant expressiveness of the kind I've described far more difficult. Still there are great Japanese calligraphers, great because they turn such disadvantage to strength.

Stryk: Please explain.

Awakawa: Well, the calligrapher in taking account of the non-*kanji* elements, can if he's very skillful create an even greater sense of intensity through pacing and contrast. In any case he never seems to be inhibited by them; our best work rivals in every sense fine Chinese examples.

Stryk: Is not the writing of Chinese poems very difficult for a Japanese? Where is his audience? There can be only a few able to read and appreciate such poems.

Awakawa: When have such considerations ever proved deterrents? One writes Chinese poems because one loves the art, thrills to its depths and harmonies. And because Li Po, Tu Fu, Wang Wei wrote such poems. Where is their equal, anywhere?

Stryk: For you as Zennist the fact that the great masters wrote such poems must be an added inducement. Could you tell me something about that?

Awakawa: Yes, overwhelmingly inspiring, for greatest insights, especially in enlightenment and death poems, were expressed through them. When I read them I feel that I am standing in the presence of the masters, their voices are so clear. Naturally my poems, written in the same spirit, according to the same aesthetic, take strength from theirs. A feeling far more mysterious than I can hope to express.

Stryk: Your paintings are exhibited and sold in galleries. What of your poems? It must be difficult to print Chinese poems. Is there much interest in them?

Awakawa: Limited, I'm afraid, to fellow Zennists, perhaps scholars. We have our magazines, few to be sure, but they are good. Then of course I exhibit calligraphy of my poems along with paintings—that's my chief interest as artist.

Stryk: Have any contemporaries writing exclusively such poems won fame? Are their books bought and discussed?

Awakawa: Hardly! No, we're a small group—not that it matters.

Stryk: You have some Daumier reproductions. Do you like Western painting?

Awakawa: Some—obviously Daumier, his simplicity, directness, the strong linear quality. Such things attract me strongly to him.

Stryk: There are others like Daumier.

Awakawa: I beg to disagree, though admittedly I've not made a deep study of Western art. Many in Japan think Daumier supreme.

Stryk: Impressive as Sengai?

Awakawa: Not to me. Even at his best he does not give essentials in the way that Sengai does. You see, a Zen painter works swiftly, captures the essence of a moment, therefore the absolute. No thinking, no deliberation, no mind-work to cloud the image. Painting like Sengai's is pure *zenki* (dynamism), a combination of lightness and depth, that's what makes it unique.

Stryk: Nonchalance?

Awakawa: That's often the effect, to be sure, but only through careful preparation lasting years. Discipline is always part of it, making possible the freedom you admire, the nonchalance. Such quality can't be found elsewhere.

Stryk: When you lectured and demonstrated in America did you encounter any skepticism?

Awakawa: Little, if any. No, those who came to listen and observe seemed very sympathetic.

Stryk: Did that extend to Zen itself? Was the interest serious?

Awakawa: Strangely enough, more so perhaps than in Japan at that time. Bear

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in mind I speak of twenty years ago. Now the interest here is very strong again, stronger than ever before.

Stryk: To what do you attribute that?

Awakawa: The need is greater today. Look around you: most have gone mad with desire for material things. Zen reaches inside them when they are off-guard, revealing something precious which they know must be preserved. It is after all their heritage. In recent years that need, that realization, has intensified. Zen painting and calligraphy have never been more in demand.

Stryk: The prices bear that out. When I lived here in 1962, it was possible to find treasured sumie selling for $100. Today the same scroll would sell for $1000, and one would have to be lucky to find a truly good one.

Awakawa: All that began about ten years ago, when suddenly the Japanese woke up to find themselves among the wealthy of the earth. What a surprise, when you consider what happened to us. People began buying feverishly back into their past, especially the old scrolls.

Stryk: Most Japanese painters, though, are as ultra-modern as their contemporaries elsewhere, and their works often command high prices. What of traditional modern art?

Awakawa: There's no comparison. People like myself find it impossible to live by paintings alone.

Stryk: Are you troubled by the way so many work today? I mean advanced painters, whose works resemble in every way those of Westerners.

Awakawa: Troubled? Should I be?

Stryk: Well, do you value what they do as art?

Awakawa: A better question may be, Do they think it is? If so, why shouldn't they work that way? So long as there are those who appreciate what they do.

Stryk: Very little of it, I feel, is good. Recently I went to an exhibit of contemporary works at the Modern Museum at Ueno, Tokyo: acres of sameness plastered the walls.

Awakawa: Ah, *you* seem to be troubled by the fact.

Stryk: Puzzled, certainly. I found nothing distinctive in their works. Certainly nothing of Japan.

Awakawa: Quite the contrary. Much of contemporary Japan, I'm afraid, a new Japan which for the most part has little interest left in things concerning me. But it too is Japan—that's reality.

Stryk: What do such artists think of tradition, as upheld by you, by Zen communities?

Awakawa: You'd have to ask them. I suspect they tolerate us, I doubt they despise us. Most are young and very tired of what they think is past.

Stryk: I find such tolerance remarkable. You feel no misgivings?

Awakawa: None, truly,—were I to, what good would it do? What interests me has never had broad appeal, for it concerns enlightened vision, something few attain. Yet there is interest enough; works like mine, after all, are exhibited, drawing some—if only grudging—attention from the critics.

Stryk: For you, then, painting is *Gado*, the painter's Way to truth?

Awakawa: That I cannot claim, such claims cannot be made. If my painting leads to insight, revelation, then perhaps *Gado* may be my way, but it could equally be *Shodo* (calligraphy) or *Kado* (poetry)—or a combination of the three! All that is for others to decide. You see, ours is a language of honorifics. One does not call oneself poet, for example. If one is gifted and fortunate in poetry others may call one so. As you can see, your question is somewhat embarrassing.

Stryk: Yet art is your whole life, and even in these times your work is much admired.

Awakawa: That should mean nothing to a Zennist.

Stryk: That reminds me of something the master Taigan Takayama said in his foreword to our volume *Zen Poems of China and Japan: The Crane's Bill*. He spoke of our translation of the poems, with Takashi Ikemoto, as a thing of no merit. He was right, in the strict Zen sense, but I'd like to feel it is good to see one's endeavors having merit. Else why engage in them? Is that Western attitude a form of attachment?

SENGAI: *The Eight Views of Omi*

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Awakawa: All such things are relative. One should of course regard one's work the most important thing in the world for oneself, which indeed it could well be, yet in the grand scheme of things it truly may be of no merit. In any case, it might be dangerous to think otherwise.

Stryk: Dangerous?

Awakawa: The Zennist, you see, learns early in his career—whatever it may be—that the only worthwhile pursuit is the discovery of the original man, which takes a lifetime's effort. All those things we do—paint, make poems, whatever—should serve that effort.

Stryk: So that's what is meant by a *do,* a Way?

Awakawa: Yes, though it's a bit more complex than I put it. On such matters we expect our masters to pass judgment—*they* decide whether a man's art may become his *do*.

Stryk: Have you felt over the years, through your activities, a discovery of the original man in yourself?

Awakawa: The masters with whom I've worked from time to time advised me to continue my work in the arts. They seemed to feel it helped in my endeavor.

Stryk: Have they been competent to judge your work?

Awakawa: More competent, I can assure you, than many so-called art experts!

Stryk: Because of knowledge of the arts?

Awakawa: Rather because of their knowledge of man, of me, and all those things historically true of Zen. None of them have been practicing artists.

Stryk: But such spiritual qualifications, important as they are to Zen itself, would not assure competence in judgment of art works. I'm a bit puzzled when you speak of seeking their approval over that of qualified critics. Indeed, it's that kind of mysticism which troubles many interested in Zen.

Awakawa: Why mysticism should be troubling, I can't fathom. Perhaps such a person should look elsewhere for intellectual stimulation. I have never known a Zen master less than unerring in his judgment of such matters. For one thing all are expected to excel, if not in actual making of art works of one kind or another, then in the appreciation of the aesthetic on which they are normally based. That should not surprise the student of Zen.

Stryk: Yet it does surprise me in a way.

Awakawa: Let's put it this way: a master's main concern is the enlightenment of those who come to him, whatever they bring him in their hands. His assessment of what's offered, whether the solution of a koan, a poem, a painting, is based on a clear aesthetic of Zen, he knows instinctively whether a work touches on essentials. It's for that reason he is the best possible evaluator. Were you to hand him a haiku, he would take for granted it's composed of seventeen syllables, and so on. That need not be discussed. What would interest him would be whether the poem reveals, brings light to darkness. It would be revelatory, by his high standards, only if finely done, yet technique taken for granted he would only discuss content.

Stryk: Whereas an art critic might discuss method at the expense of spirit?

Awakawa: Naturally, he would see that as his job. His judgment would have a limited kind of importance to his readers—but that's as far as it would go.

Stryk: Are there not masters indifferent to art, feeling it a waste of their disciples' time?

Awakawa: There are some less involved than others. Zen artists naturally show their works to masters whose interest is strong, perhaps practitioners themselves. Just as there are different sects appealing to distinct temperaments, there are masters right for some, wrong for others—though sometimes he who appears the wrong one may be just the right one! His lack of sympathy or natural interest spurring the disciple to greater effort, whatever's being done. There are many such examples.

Stryk: Art for you, then, is a way to understanding?

Awakawa: That's the intention behind everything I undertake.

Stryk: That in itself sets a very high standard.

Awakawa: In things of spirit—can any standard be too high?

Stryk: What I have in mind is the personal quality of works made in that spirit. How can one determine, whatever the response, whether in producing a work its maker experienced revelation?

Awakawa: Simple enough: if we are moved by it, he must have been; if a truth is revealed, it was revealed to him in making it.

Stryk: That *sounds* simple, but is it? Life even for the enlightened isn't always intense. Surely there are times when one feels very ordinary, yet is able to produce impressively.

Awakawa: An enlightened man *must* feel ordinary at all times, but this ordinary state is, comparatively, on a high plane of awareness. No, I don't mean to suggest the artist creates in a state of excitement—he would not work well that way. Rather as a result of certain experiences, usually coming early in his career, his mind has a certain cast, everything seen in a certain light—where perhaps there would be darkness for others. He may not even be conscious of that light, but *we* are, standing before his works. Sengai's nonchalance, as you call it, everywhere present, in the most casual of his efforts, was surely the result of his awakening, gained early in life. From the very start he was unique, thus he is unique in our culture.

Stryk: Because of his art do you place him above other masters?

Awakawa: Strictly as Zennist?

Stryk: Yes.

Awakawa: Well, we must remember Sesshu too was a Zen master—and there's Hakuin. But, yes, Sengai is my favorite, and he was a very important Zen master. Fortunately there are records, anecdotes, concerning him as priest. They verify the spirit every one of his paintings and poems suggests, vivacity, extraordinary perception.

Stryk: If there were no such records?

Awakawa: The works themselves would tell. Whenever I consider one I envy those who knew him, whose Zen came to perfection under him. They were blessed!

Stryk: Yet there must be fine artists who would make poor spiritual guides.

Awakawa: Undoubtedly, but not Zennists, no Zennist could possibly be such a one. The works of such men, however valuable, would probably not appeal to Zennists.

Stryk: It must be wonderful to live, work with so clear and exalted an idea of art's meaning.

Awakawa: That's what *Zen* means to me. □

2. Noh Actor

After 200 years the Kongo Noh Company remains one of the most active and highly respected in Japan, the original hall in the heart of Kyoto well pre-

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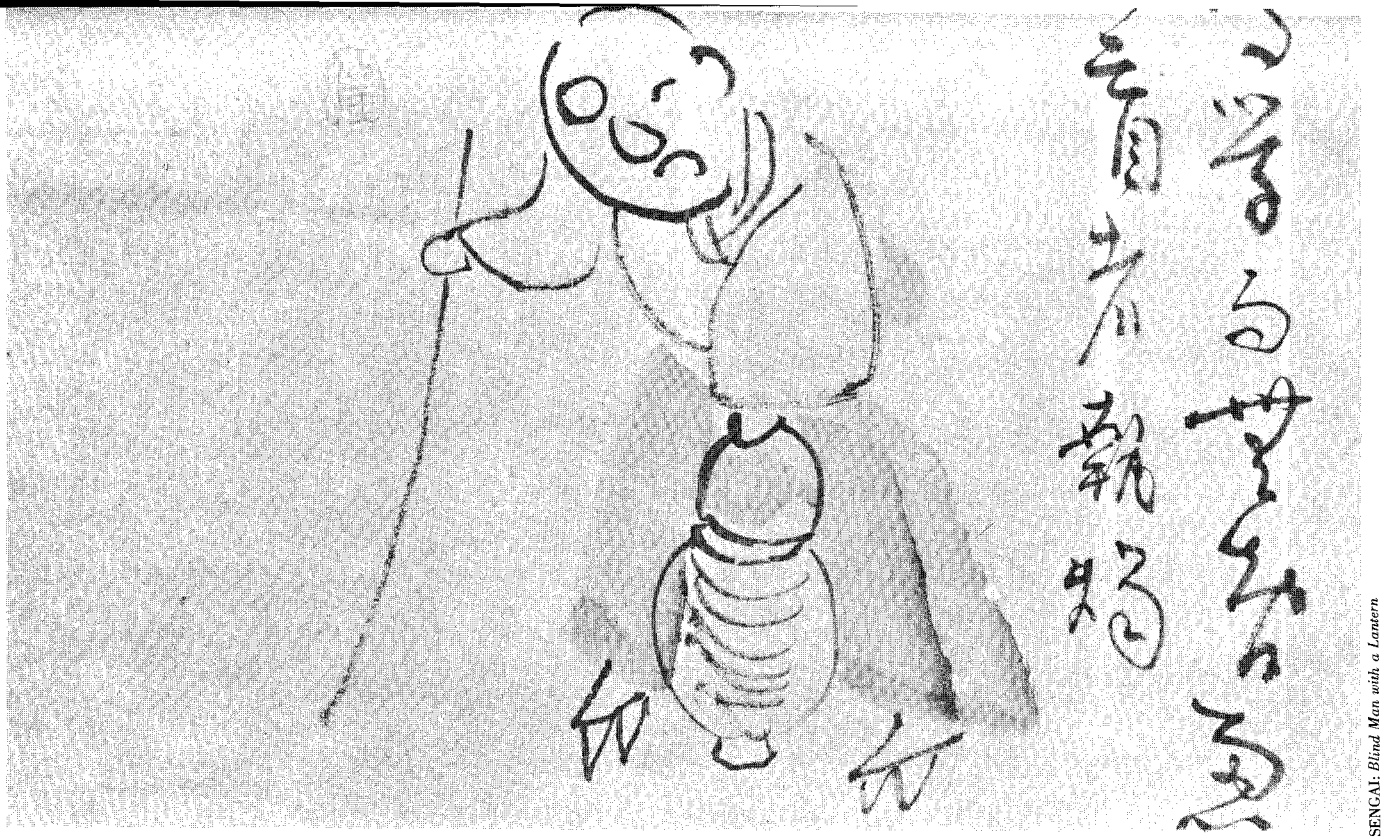

SENGAI: *Blind Man with a Lantern*

served. Its seasonal cycle of plays is attended for the most part by subscribed connoisseurs, from all over, many of whom devotedly follow the action with one eye on the text, like music lovers listening to a favorite score. This is especially true when classics like *Miidera* are performed, one of two major offerings on this afternoon. Later, I am to meet Mitsiharu Teshima, the actor who will play the leading role, that of a mother crazed with grief over a lost child. Mitsiharu Teshima, is the son of the "Living National Treasure" Dazaimon Teshima, who will also perform this afternoon, giving a remarkably moving interpretation, undistracted by a filming of the performance—a not uncommon practice, I am told. Flashbulbs flick among the audience, even at the highest moments of the drama, but most playgoers are very calm, clearly absorbed. A field-day for enthusiasts: the richly colored, patterned costumes, the stark but brilliant setting dominated by a painted pine tree, the ceremonious grace of actors, musicians, chorus, the panorama of the long ramp over which all enter. Once *Miidera* is underway, I sense once more why Noh is thought the perfect art, using music, chanting, gesture, dance and, above all, poetry, with absolute harmony. The play lasts a little over an hour, yet the impression is of great length, transporting one into a timeless realm. Intense experience; some are so overcome they leave the hall briefly to recover with warm tea, usually when the chorus takes over from the actors to relate in most expressive chanting the story, for only the highest moments are enacted.

Deeply stirred by the artistry of Mitsiharu Teshima's style, I can hardly wait to talk with him about his art, the way in which it has been affected by Zen. Noh, preserved, developed for centuries by its masters and priests, has long been considered Zen art. This being my first meeting with a Noh actor, I have strong expectations. His performance in *Miidera* overwhelms me. I find myself relieved that it comes early, giving me the chance to compare his work with that of other actors, including his famous father, the principal in the other of the two major offerings, *Tenko*. The acting of the "Living National Treasure" is what one might expect, there is a great hush at his every entrance—such men are greatly honored by the Japanese. But his son is no less impressive, every gesture, every subtle turn of head so that the light on the mask alters expression, the heartbreaking voice. A half-hour after the last play, we meet backstage: his room, large, dimly lit, is filled with packing cases, small silk-lined wooden boxes holding masks, and costumes. Mitsiharu Teshima sits, head bowed, at a small table in the center, and when I enter he rises, bows deeply, lifts his fine head. His face, hidden until this moment behind a mask, is beautifully expressive. I am surprised to find that he is not tired, rather elated, all having gone so well. His voice, which on stage echoed like a singer's, is deep and calm, his smile most welcoming. I begin by asking about the dance in *Miidera* (dance is the climax of all Noh plays), which he performed magnificently.

Stryk: One of the many things which interest me is the idea of variations on what I assume to be a set dance, in movement, speed and gesture. Are any possible?

Teshima: Yes, and no. That is, variations, if I get your meaning, are always themselves set or prescribed, nothing impromptu permitted. That surprises you. Well, I can assure you if an audience detect any such attempt they walk out as a man—or worse. Yet prescribed variations are known to all lovers of Noh, and an actor who could not use them would not be taken seriously. But great care must be taken—always is. There is no place for the ambitious amateur, out to shock, in our theater.

Stryk: Do such variations differ from one Noh school to another?

Teshima: Schools differ in all things. I speak only of ours, the Kongo. Were you to see another school's *Miidera*, you'd find many differences. We are a Kyoto school, our interpretations reflect life and taste here. Costuming, chanting, pacing, atmosphere, everything. In some schools the mother's dance in *Miidera* may be, shall we say, more vigorous, but perhaps lacking in the refinement we aim at.

Stryk: Would that make it less effective?

Teshima: Far from it. As one might expect, Tokyo dancing is more vigorous,

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like the place itself. I've been formed not only by our Noh tradition but the very tempo of Kyoto life, the ambiance of all that makes this city unique—temples, gardens, weather, everything.

Stryk: I was so much affected by your voice, resonant, even behind the mask. Could one become so fine a performer without such natural delivery?

Teshima: "Even behind the mask?" Rather *because,* in part, of the mask, knowing how to use it. Yes, it's doubtful one could achieve the same result without an expressive voice, simply because voice delivers the poetry—most expressive in Noh. The voice need not be deep as mine, a purely physical matter, like the shape of an ear. Without depth of voice one could still be very expressive, so long as feeling's there and the voice pointed properly from behind the mask. The same must be true in the West—surely all your great interpreters of Shakespeare don't have deep voices. One knows the expressive possibilities of words, understands the author's intention. Besides, when a voice is not naturally rich there may be compensating qualities: grace, poise, delicacy of gesture, a thousand and one things.

Stryk: It must be gratifying to have given so much pleasure to so many this afternoon. The audience seemed electrified. There may have been some critics among them. Do you read what they write of your performances? Can you learn from them?

Teshima: Not at all. Usually critics of Noh are men with much time and minor literary skill. Their praise is often effusive, and always very general—always the same adjectives—one article echoing echoes of echoes. You know well, as a writer, what I mean; the same things must be true in all the arts all over the world. I don't mean to sound ungrateful—I've been very generously treated—but as a group, despite a handful with talent, their taste generally saddens me. They seem to care only for the more sensational things. It would take the most sensitive poet to deal adequately with these things. The poets are of course busy writing poems. Most critics seem to feel they must appear in print for one reason or another, in order to hold jobs, writing on cultural matters in very general terms, no matter whether it's on flower arranging, pastry making or a performance of Noh. Learn from them? Hardly.

Stryk: At times it must be difficult to be son of a Living National Treasure—so much to live up to. Watching your father perform *Tenko,* watching the audience respond to him, I felt something awesome unfolding. Did you begin training very young? Was your father strict? Are you still learning from him?

Teshima: I began training when seven or eight, the usual age in Noh families, and, yes, my father is known to be a disciplinarian—with everyone, not only me. Always with himself. But of course I have learned from others, as you might expect—some very different from my father in their approach to the art. Perhaps more than through technique, he taught and inspired me through the quality of his life. He has given me what he has always had, something important to live for. That's the important thing, isn't it, whatever the pursuit? Noh is my world, but I'm interested in all arts.

Stryk: Ballet, opera?

Teshima: Among others. Anything that's touched with poetry, for that's what Noh is—poetry. Nothing less. In whatever art, that is what matters to me. Work without it would be worthless.

Stryk: I know Noh texts are read more as poems than plays. Are you especially affected by the text? Is a fine Noh play without an impressive one imaginable?

Teshima: No such play exists: text is everything. I could not possibly perform a play whose text does not move, even exalt. I act out poetry, the greater the poem the better my acting—if I am up to it. That's the main thing, being worthy of the poetry. It takes a lifetime.

Stryk: Miidera is renowned for splendid poetry. Could you have performed it as well as you've done today, say, ten years ago, when around twenty?

Teshima: I would not have been given the chance! I could not have done well, had I been: ten years makes all the difference when it comes to the interpretations of words so profound. Life teaches, life prepares.

Stryk: What are the conditions of ideal performance?

Teshima: Well, assuming such performance possible, everything—musicians, timing, what we refer to as *yugen,* a depth of mystery which has to enter the audience itself.

Stryk: Audience?

Teshima: Oh yes—they vary, time to time, place to place. Some watch very keenly, like participants. One always does better for them.

Stryk: How was today's?

Teshima: For Kyoto, these days, not bad, but surely you must have felt as strongly as I up on the stage something profoundly wrong with all that filming and so on. Appalling. Yet it's something we have grown to expect, must live with. However, it doesn't happen always, or everywhere. Tokyo audiences are better, we find; perhaps we do our best work there.

Stryk: That's hard to believe. Though the filming was at times distracting, I felt the audience very much in harmony. They certainly seemed moved.

Teshima: What we feel from the stage, is often very different. I'm simply trying to give frank answers to your questions. The truth is that *need,* when it comes to audiences, is a major factor. In Kyoto culture is everywhere. People living here hardly distinguish between its various manifestations, visiting a famous garden in the morning, going to a performance of Noh in the afternoon in the same spirit in which they attend a fashion show of new kimono at Nijo Castle. Perhaps I exaggerate, but not much! In Tokyo, where the sensitive often feel brutalized by the city, they truly need the poetry of Noh. When given the chance they rush to it with a kind of hunger. The actor feeds their hunger with his best, and gives it gladly. Don't judge Noh audiences by what you found here today.

Stryk: One thing which intrigued me was the way so many looked on at the text, like music students at the playing of a great quartet. Yet it might be disconcerting to you that every word is not only being listened to but read?

Teshima: I neither approve nor disapprove the practice. Still I can't imagine those who come to follow texts are responsive to the whole, though they must have great appreciation of the *text*. What of the unwritten poetry, gesture, harmony of movement? That takes both eyes to appreciate.

Stryk: Though small, the hall was filled today, yet numbers were scant compared with the great gatherings at Kabuki. Is Kabuki so much more popular?

Teshima: It would seem so. Obviously it gives more pleasure—simple as that.

Stryk: What do you think of Kabuki?

Teshima: The finest performers are

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wonderful. Unlike many fellow artists, I don't find Kabuki vulgar because it is flamboyant. Yet I think it lesser art, by far. To sense the difference, you must see a play like *Kanjincho* done first as Noh, then as Kabuki. Historically, as I'm sure you're aware, the Noh came long before the Kabuki version. The Kabuki is very colorful, emphasizing the sensational part of the story, the Noh is very subtle and yet, at the same time, building in intensity. Well played, the Noh is far more dramatic. The difference between Kabuki and Noh is essentially that between prose and poetry, and the prose of Kabuki, though wonderfully vigorous at times, is always prose. As I've said, Noh is poetry. The difference lies in the texts themselves.

Stryk: A very tolerant view of an art form that seems to threaten the survival of one's own!

Teshima: Kabuki has never threatened the survival of Noh. When has prose threatened the survival of poetry? Never—not in a thousand years!

Stryk: Could you speak a little of the use of mask in Noh?

Teshima: The mask is all important, having a force of its own, as the actor feels putting it on.

Stryk: The great poet W. B. Yeats was strongly affected by Noh, basing his own dramatic work on its principles—plays very much admired. In an essay dealing with Noh he spoke of the mask as assuring the gravity and depth of performance. He thought it a constant, superior to the living face in its expressive range—a shock to those brought up to value Western Theater.

Teshima: (gently lifting with a cloth the mask of the old woman he had worn in *Miidera*): This mask, my friend, is two hundred years old. For generations it has served our theater, its tradition. Wearing it, I step outside time, what in Buddhism we call *Samsara*. It fills me with confidence I couldn't possibly feel without it. My face, changing from minute to minute, registering the whirl of self, is incapable of expressing what it expresses, what it always has and always will, the absolute. I would feel naked, vulnerable without it.

Stryk: I am beginning to see. Tell me, did the wearing of such a treasured object take a long time to get used to?

Teshima: Almost as another self. There is great art in wearing it. Pointing it to take the light just so, at precisely the right moment. Using voice so that it emerges just right, for the mask is a kind of echo chamber and plays tricks.

Stryk: Do you always handle it so gently with a cloth?

Teshima: Yes, that's why the lacquer is unfaded. It has been handed down respectfully, just so, for a very long time.

Stryk: When you say that you have learnt from many, do you mean you find yourself learning constantly, and as you develop in the art do you find your life changing?

Teshima: There's no end to learning. My father claims to learn each time he sets foot on the stage, and that at over seventy and having attained, as you know, the highest possible recognition. I am only just beginning to grasp his meaning.

Stryk: What importance has Zen in your life?

Teshima: Noh has always been associated with Zen, and many of its finest artists have been priests. In fact the young man who played my son in *Miidera* is studying for the priesthood. I have been a Zennist by family tradition and by necessity—it is my Way. For most of us the writings of Zeami, the greatest figure in Noh, author of our greatest plays, are sacred, read like a bible. As you may know he based the Noh aesthetic on Zen ideals.

Stryk: Do you practice *zazen*, attend a Zen temple?

Teshima: I have done, but I am now so fully into my career that it takes all my time, energy and imagination. Yet all that I learned of the Way has carried over into my work.

Stryk: In a few weeks, I have been told, your company will appear on NHK Television. Are you excited?

Teshima: Excited? No, but pleased, since it's our hope to share Noh's beauty with as many as possible. More than hope, responsibility. It could enrich the lives of many, were they to give it a chance.

Stryk: In preparing for television do you contemplate doing anything which might make the performance more appealing, less difficult?

Teshima: What a thought! No, of course not. That would destroy its spirit altogether. □

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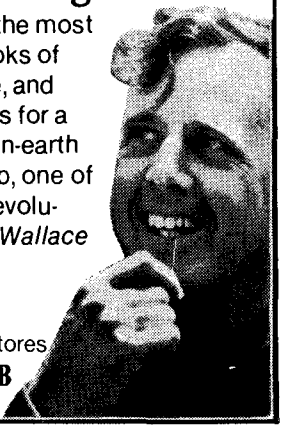

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Lawrence Sturhahn

Ashland

We had a visitor from the east this summer, and one of the topics for conversation was how far westerners drive! Being a transplanted easterner I remember that, even remember the first time I heard about it in *The Virginian* which I read when I was a kid. They thought—as I remember—nothing of riding 50 miles to pick up the mail. It's a tradition, right? I think defensively, listening to our guest say she'd just as soon not drive from Philadelphia to Camden. So, after a pleasant couple of days she went back to Philadelphia, and three weeks or so later we drove 543 miles one way to go to the theatre.

Starting north in the middle of a cool morning with a brilliant sun above, soon, very soon, one valley west of The Valley of the Moon, we were in the breathless heat of most places in California that lie between the mountains and the sea. Turning west to cross to the coast, the last part of the highway following the winding course of the Navarro River, rushing through a dappled shade under magnificent redwoods, we come from the heat to the ubiquitous cold Pacific wind.

Mendocino is both an anachronism and a souvenir outlet, its shops pushing artifacts. Away from the solid ranks of tourist cars parked on the main streets, down toward the water, are houses and fences and vistas that date back to other eras. By a weathered-silver wooden fence we pulled up, and sitting on the shoulder sheltered from the wind, we ate cheese and torn pieces of sourdough bread and drank chilled white wine. Away from the *chic*, with its architecture and its intense earth colors filtered through the moisture-laden air, Mendocino is a part of the United States that looks special. And, as the crow flies, it's 90 miles to the interstate. But the roads that surmount the coast range to the interior do not go as the crow flies; it's farther in time and tire wear, and perhaps that's just as well. And on the twisting narrow roads are the logging trucks, shiny roaring monsters, bearing down at you or coming up fast from behind.

Fort Bragg, the next town north, is awful: commercial, burned out and plastic, but as quickly as you have cleared its northern boundaries there's the coast road, Highway 1, again. Twisting and turning, opening sudden, often startling vistas to the roiling ocean battering against this rock-bound misty margin of the earth; on cold beautiful beaches in between, people in windbreakers and parkas lean against the strong wind.

The guide book is fascinating with its vignettes that juxtapose another time against our own:

> *. . . on the west side of town the remains of an old saw mill are visible. A short way further is a coffee shop which is followed by two rustic resorts with cabins, trailer spaces, and camp sites . . . the Mattole is named for a tribe of Athabascan Indians who had several villages in the vicinity of Cape Mendocino. They shared the fate of the neighboring Sinkyone before scholars could learn much about them . . . the hilly countryside off the river is a blend of hayfields, apple orchards, brushland, and second-growth forest. Time has softened the scars left by fire and clear cutting . . . the term 'skid row' is said to have originated on the North Coast. It referred to the shanty towns which sprang up alongside the early skid roads where they terminated at the coastal mill . . . the earliest mill was the little 'Taupoos' founded in 1850 by Jim Eddy and Martin White just four months after James Ryan founded the town. In 1852, Ryan went into partnership with James Duff to build a large mill. The machinery ordered from San Francisco was swept off the deck of the* Santa Clara *in a storm. So Ryan ordered the vessel beached at a place between 'D' and 'E' streets. Here the ship's engines were removed and used to power the new mill . . . now most of the old firms are gone. They have been replaced by a handful of corporate giants which have their headquarters outside the state. One holdover is Pacific Lumber Company. This firm traces its beginning to a small mill built by McPherson and Wetherby on the Albion River in 1869 . . . (Guidebook to the Northern California Coast,* Volume 2—Mike Hayden)

In fog bound Crescent City we stayed what remained of the night, then in the same dense fog at first light drove away from the coast, east again and north, through towering forests, skirting the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, crossing the northern ridges of Siskiyou Mountains, following the Rogue River for a while. Coming finally, 543 miles from home, to Ashland, where in 1935 the Oregon Shakespearean Festival started with an estimated attendance of 650 and estimated productions costs of three hundred and fifty dollars. This year 371 performances of nine plays were staged in three theatres to an estimated audience of 235,000 for a budget of one million, four hundred and four thousand, five hundred and thirty dollars.

2.

The town, lying on the western edge of valley with fields bleached brown by the sun, looking across to the rounded, wooded slopes of gentle mountains on the other side, is very American. Probably, as Dennis Bigelow, company Production Stage Manager, said later, the time to come to Ashland is 4th of July, "the big fest here . . . small town America celebrating the birth of its country . . . it's wonderful!" You can see that there, clean, organized, a community within which there is a college (Southern Oregon State) and a theatrical repertory company; it's a town formed by those commercial, educational, aesthetic facts: neat shops, a "Paddington Station," a store where they sell indian jewelry. There are good restaurants; at the French one where we had dinner the *tournedos* was excellent. And at the Underground Gourmet Delicatessen, which is painted white, for breakfast they serve health food and have prints on the wall

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from the tourist shop upstairs, all with the price tags dangling off them.

Lithia Park in Ashland is one of the most pleasant city parks I have been in, green lawns under big shade trees with a large rock-sided pond in the center. In it are ducks and geese and a fountain that erupts and subsides, erupts and subsides again. And here at noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays there is a public discussion of the plays and theatre, led by a member of the company—actor, or director, or technician.

The ground on which the original theatre was constructed is part of this park. In fact the first Shakespearean stage was built on the foundations of an original Chautauqua theatre built for the southern Oregon circuit which flourished around the turn of the century and then faded away. In 1935 Angus Bowmer, a teacher at the Southern Oregon Normal School (now SOSC), talked the town into permission to use the old ruins and out of one hundred dollars. The stage was the old floor of the Chautauqua dome and two columns with a curtain hung behind, a rickety scaffold as stage house, and on it he produced *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. And with the exception of the years of World War II, the series has continued, a total of forty-two years, ever since.

The theatre that stands on the hill above the pond is an approximation of the Globe of London in Shakespeare's time. But, as is true of all Shakespearean theatres, it is only an *approximation* because the original Globe was destroyed by a fire that started with the discharge of a cannon in the performance of *Henry XIII* in 1613, and none of its actual dimensions survive. Now it is the third version of an Elizabethan Stage House seen in Ashland, the first being that erected on the platform of the old Chautauqa dome (which was also destroyed by a fire in 1939), and the second, opening at the end of the war when the festival resumed (which was also damaged enough by a fire to be condemned). In 1959, Richard L. Hay went to England to do research, and on his return designed the elaborate stage house that now exists.

So that here in Ashland, Oregon, for nine months of the year there is a viable Shakespearean Festival that now plays in three theatres, the other two both supremely modern, not only Shakespeare, but every sort of theatre from classic to absurd. But the approximate Elizabethan theatre is one part of the heart of it, with souvenir stands in the back where volunteer townladies in Elizabethan garb sell all kinds of things along with English tarts and candles.

And what besides *Antony and Cleopatra* are we to see? Elizabeth Huddle's staging of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* is in the Bowmer Theatre, and in the small, innovative and ideal-for-the-experimental, the Black Swan (just completed this year), Eugene O'Neill's *Moon for the Misbegotten*.

Years ago I worked on the classic American film, "Long Day's Journey into Night" (directed by Sidney Lumet, and acted in by Katherine Hepburn, Sir

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Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards, and Dean Stockwell). It's a stunning movie still, black and white *et al*, its most salient flaw that no screenplay was written for it. It was the play script, trepiditiously changed in minor ways by these excellent actors and director to make it play better as a film. For, as Dudley Nichols, an eminent screenwriter, wrote:

> *Writing for the screen, if long practised, also seduces one to write dialogue in a snyoptic fashion which may show itself to the eye when printed on a page, but should never reveal itself to the ear when spoken from the screen. Stage dialogue, no matter how wonderful in quality, cannot be directly shifted to the screen; it must be condensed, synopsized. The reason is obvious; on the stage the actor depends for projection upon the word; on the screen he relies upon visual projection. And it is hard to describe visual projection in a screenplay; that must be left to the director and the cast.*

It's a small flaw in a classic film, and the changes were made with reverence for one of the American theatre's great plays; as I recall, the reason for no screenplay was Mrs. O'Neill's desire that there be none. But it remains for me a great film, Eugene O'Neill's study of, and artistic expression for, and autobiography of, the terrible internecine warfare and the bonds of love and need that both bind and sunder a family—his own family.

Moon for the Misbegotten, another play in which the bedevilled Tyrones (read O'Neills) appear, is another of the author's investigations of himself and his family history.

> ". . . there is no present or future, but the past happening over and over again,"

is a line from the play, and isn't it the damning welter of past disasters which—apparently—can never be changed that strangle us? And yet to know oneself we deal with it! "You can't go home again," Wolfe said ironically, because you have to. Just this past week at a press preview of a film to be screened at the San Francisco International Film Festival I saw "The Orphans," an excellent Soviet film in which this same paradox was posed. It is the story of a writer in contemporary time who—along with his two brothers and sister—was orphaned in the German campaigns of World War II. He goes in search of his brothers and sister now, and his finding of them becomes a search into the past. Meeting the surviving brothers (the sister died at age 13 for unexplained reasons), one a crazed and pompous architect, the other a criminal in jail, it elicits in the writer his memory of the past again, the quasi-military school for orphans in which he was placed just after the war.

The picture is a detailed and sensitive evocation of preadolescent sensibility, but it is also a metaphor for a terrible understanding of the horror of war. It is a moving film, written and directed and acted in by Nikolay Goubenko, and at the end the writer's voice (which has narrated here and there through the film) makes a statement that you can not go into the past, and yet the counter-statement is there, too: you must return to understand the past in order to understand the self in the present.

Moon for the Misbegotten seems almost too long, and that's probably because it's so intense. And it's repetitious—as *Long Day's Journey* is, too—and that's a rhetoric of writing for the stage where the drama is carried on the word. So *Moon* is long and intense, so also when it is over and the lights come up we are stunned.

"Josie gave him up because he was dead inside," she says, turning to me. Perhaps, I thought, because she saw how much James Tyrone was like her father, and because of some terrible family bond. In the Director's Notes, by Jerry Turner (the Producing Director for the entire festival), he wrote: "acts three and four are pure O'Neill at his best: an evocative mixture of guilt and compassion, tender and grotesque at the same time, moving inexorably to a vision both of death and resurrection."

3.

Theatre and films are illusions—just almost representations of what is seen around us in the world, past, present, or future. But, as a production man, my view of a film is sometimes the process of making it: the sets, number of days to shoot, call sheets and meal penalties and mechanics.

There's a lighthouse beam which falls rhythmically across the foggy window in the climactic night of "Long Day's Journey" while Mary Tyrone plays out her mad scene. This effect results from an electrician with a spot-light that he swung across the window on a signal from me: the seconds it takes the light to make its pass were timed on my watch. That small effect of process, the back-

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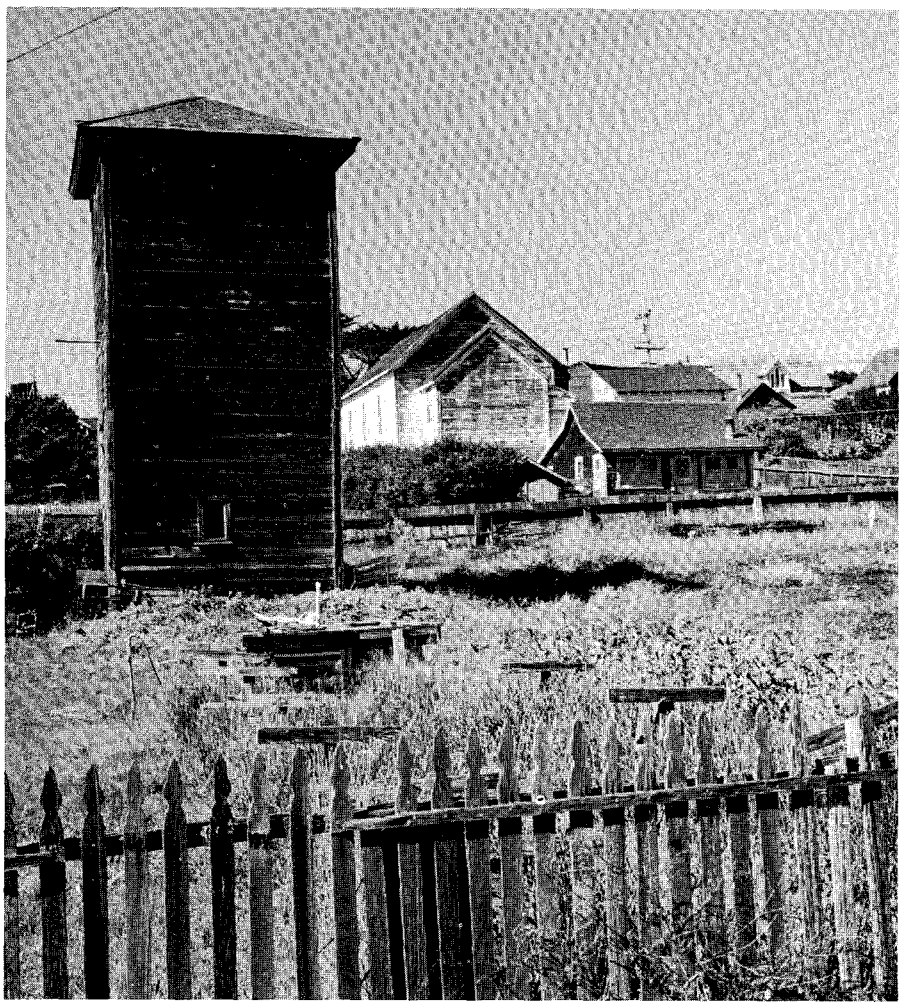
ground for Hepburn's tragic and ironic soliloquy, is part of what that scene is for me. It is fascinating as I think about it now (and it's unfortunate I didn't appreciate that then), this creation of a world, a reality in front of which the actors and the director put together the scene, create the life.

At the festival every morning is a backstage tour that lasts for two hours. The tour-guide for our small group of twelve or so was the aforementioned Dennis Bigelow, the stage manager for three plays—one of them *A Streetcar Named Desire,* which we were to see that afternoon. So we could touch the stuff of illusion, what he did was take us into selected areas: the Stage House of the Elizabethan Theatre, the auditorium of the Angus Bowmer; the tour started in the Black Swan.

It was there that we had seen *Moon* and it was true that part of the impact of it was from the nature of the tiny theatre (138 capacity) where no seat is more than fifteen feet from the playing area, and the first rows are literally under the actors working the edge of the stage. You find yourself looking up at them as they deliver lines, and as Bigelow (who was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide) said, "just as you could reach out and grab the actor physically, so he can grab you back emotionally."

In the prop and costume room they set up for the tourists to see and touch, put on the sour smelling papier-mâché animal masks, the tawdry costumes where the button holes are fake and the closure made with Velcro, heft the ugly iron swords. We all reveled in it.

It is the stage manager who's responsible for the physical production of the play, the mechanics behind the unfolding of an illusion, and he took us thence to the costume department, through the green room, past an open dressing room or two. He enjoyed explaining it all to us, the juicy bits about how the pit of hell in the stage floor worked, how they had red lights which flooded up when the trap opened, and the big cushion for the devils to jump down on. He mentioned in passing how little attention/acclaim production people got, but in his tone there was no hint of recrimination or frustration. Rather, as the tour progressed, the stronger and stronger impressions that this was a man who truly loved what he did—and that's a very pleasant thing to see in somebody. I felt a strong empathy for him, an understanding of his joy in part of the creation, because what is true of the stage manager in theatre is generally true of the first assistant director on a film; the two jobs are analogous. It's how I started, in Iowa in 1951, where I had been stage manager of an all-campus musical variety show, written and directed by a friend of mine.



Dennis also told us if this year was next to driest, last year was the most rain they ever had. They play in the Elizabethan Theatre customarily in the rain, first putting rain capes over the costumes, and if it gets heavier, finally changing into ordinary clothes, aborting it only as a last resort. Only two shows have been cancelled in the last seven years. And the audience? someone asks. And the audience, Dennis tells us, sits dry in garbage can liners. One you step in and pull it up to the waist, the other you pull over your head. But not this year; it hasn't rained. "As a matter of fact," Dennis said, "we would be willing to play at least two weeks in it just to have it."

In the lobby of the Angus Bowmer Memorial Theatre, a superbly modern structure which opened in 1970 and has a capacity of 601, the airiness and comfort of that space with its curved windows was contrasted to the theatre itself. There, with walls of charcoal brown, the whole focus from the seats is on the stage. And Dennis told us how important we—the audience—are.

It was Peter Brooks who said that to make theatre two things are necessary: an actor and an audience. Without one of them there is no theatre. And on stage, actors are absolutely aware of how the audience feels, and how—which we should understand—how that feeling can effect a performance, to the point where lines are directed to one part of the audience to the exclusion of another. "Theatre," Dennis said brightly, "is a Magic Place! Obviously I adore it. You work in this business and never grow up."

Don't people in show business have in them a strong sense of being like a child? So when that world is bright it's all joy—but so too is a child's world filled with selfishness, egotism, one ups and one downs, misunderstandings, and hurt. And this has killed some few and made shambles of some others in that world of illusion which is finally only an illusion of the world. There are the powerful, the power-brokers, the walking wounded, and too few Dennis Bigelows.

4.

Antony and Cleopatra I had mixed up in my mind with the film, "Caesar and

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Cleopatra," (G. B. Shaw), released in 1945, starring Claude Rains and Vivien Leigh. In the reference books the film is noted as having been a disastrous financial debacle (costing back then one million pounds sterling) to which nobody came. I remember it as arch, stylish, and enthralling.

Shakespeare, with his episodic scenes and action-packed plots, was a consummate screenplay writer before there were movies. The stage provided for him to play on had many levels both physical and metaphoric. From hell below to heaven above, the guiding principle in man (and woman) was linear and vertical. And by him several film makers have done well, Olivier and Zeffirelli to name two. But it seemed in retrospect—unfortunately—more a curiosity to see *Antony and Cleopatra* presented in the traditional Elizabethan manner. Perhaps it was my frustration at it not being Claude Rains and Vivien Leigh up there, perhaps it was the wine with the excellent dinner and no intermission, perhaps it was the density of his language in an unfamiliar plot, but I began to feel trapped sitting in this huge bowl of people all in neat rows. To escape you'd have to feign life-threatening seizure and then traverse in front of everybody, a center of attraction and distraction. Speaking then from my admitted prejudicial point of view I opt for Shakespeare played (and perhaps judiciously cut), adapted to a modern sensibility and stage craft.

I have always thought that Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet" was a beautiful film, close to a satisfying Shakespearean experience totally. There's enough meat there (the generation gap, family feuds, trust) to stimulate an audience to think and be entertained both at once.

A Streetcar Named Desire was nostalgia first—I saw the original on Broadway and the movie released in 1951. Then I had the impression that it was suddenly, somehow, an old fashioned play, a commentary on another time. Then, it seems, we saw the intricacy and disarray of human relations, but then there were resolutions which, if not always positive, were—at least—conclusions. (And this is not so true now.) And, after all, I saw it when it opened, which makes both of us too young to be classified as classic. But then I thought: now, that's its fascination, a history of a time a scant twenty-five or thirty years ago. Within memory—could it have been that way really, and look what happened in the years in between? It is a classic American play.

Streetcar's staging was excellent; up there in the booth Dennis was making all the cues, but in my mind's eye I have a picture of Brando as Stanley, and Leigh as Blanche, a residual set of images, archetypes absorbed in 1951. Brando was (is) one of the great American actors, in spite of an eclectic and mixed bag of recent films. And "Streetcar" was directed by Elia Kazan who it is said is an "actor's director." So, with Brando, "Viva Zapata," (1952), "On the Waterfront," (1954), and "Streetcar," (1951)—for which the two and Vivien Leigh all won Academy Awards—were superior films. Sometimes there is that fusion in the creation that happens in both theatre and film of actor, script, and production.

Next year at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival in Ashland they will play Moliere's *Tartuffe*, a classical comedy, and Brecht's dark epic morality play, *Mother Courage*. Also they will have the ticketseller, *Private Lives*. (They always pick, they hope, one play to be that.) And to complement the whole thing, a modern naturalistic American Play, written in the early '70s, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*. In the summer they will open *Richard III*, *The Tempest*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Also, for the first time since 1955, they will put on the relatively unknown Shakespearean play, *Timon of Athens*, and the performance of that will mark the completion of the whole repertoire of Shakespeare's plays for the second time around. Finally, in the middle of summer, they will open *Miss Julie*.

5.

And coming back the 400-odd miles home, on the interstate we passed Mt. Shasta, a strange volcanic mountain, its upper reaches covered with snow. We passed Shasta Lake at dusk. Its capacity is four million, five hundred thousand acre/feet of water, but this summer it's empty, a massive series of deep pits with serrated red dirt sides. It's a little frightening and I wonder what the *Ancients* would say. Maybe they would make the travail into a myth, something to do with an offense against heaven. In Shakespeare's day they could always call in the *deus ex machina*, and on the stage house in Ashland they can do that too.

But this is life out here, not the illusion of the stage. So if you come this way next year—on the way to or from Ashland—check the level in the lake, and you will know whether, this winter, there was rain, whether in this life there's a god in the machine. □

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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B. Paid circulation		
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2. Mail subscription	1553	1664
C. Total paid circulation	2661	3402
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies	53	56
E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)	2714	3458
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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signature) **Robley Wilson, Jr., Editor**

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